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# Agenda Setting in English Canada in the Age of Minority Government, 2004-2011

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# AGENDA SETTING IN ENGLISH CANADA
# IN THE AGE OF MINORITY GOVERNMENT, 2004-2011

by

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## Abstract

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**Keywords:** Agenda Setting, Informational Politics, Frames Analysis, Network Theory, Political Communication, Policy Formation

This dissertation examines the contemporary relationship between agenda setting and frames analysis in Canadian federal politics from 2004-2011. The research project tests Savoie's thesis that the centralization of power has grown with the increasing size of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and that the leader of the office has most clearly exerted that power in controlling the government's agenda by applying it to the experience of minority government at the dawn of the 21st century. To test his thesis, textual analyses of the PMO's agenda-setting documents were conducted to identify the key language, frames, and controlled policy announcements that were reflected within the political discourse.

How does the discourse represent and reflect the shift in power in a dramatically changed political environment when, at least in theory, a minority government would be at the mercy of opposition parties who hold the balance of power?

From 2006 to 2011, the Harper Conservatives stayed in power by cleverly manipulating the agenda through framing and reframing issues to their advantage. The prime minister retained the final executive decision on party and

government political communications and was, therefore, the leading arbiter of the messages delivered to represent key party agenda-setting strategies. Harper has often been identified as a shrewd strategist by academics and the media alike, but how different were his agenda-setting techniques compared to previous minority government strategies?

This research identifies the communication tactics that the PMO used in 2006 to ensure its unique five key policy frames of "accountability", "child care tax credits", "cutting the GST", "patient wait time guarantees", and "tough on crime" were consistently delivered and coordinated across media in their platforms, websites, speeches, and outlays. The Harper Conservatives' new strategies included narrowing agendas, promoting wedge issues, priming voters using distracter frames, and using strict media communication protocols to attract popular support from the key segment of middle class families. Using these tactics, the government set the agenda on the dismantling of the firearms registry, framed the skills and motivations of two opposition leaders as ineffective and weak with attack advertisements, and sold the illusion that coalition governments were undemocratic.

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Ted Rogers led Rogers Communication into the wireless business in Canada in 1983, very early in the adoption of cellular phone technology, because he read Dick Tracy comic books when he was young and knew about the detective's telephone watch: "I just thought that being tethered to the wall on the phone, where you can't move, wasn't going to survive […]. I grew up when everybody was talking about a Dick Tracy watch with a phone, so it wasn't hard for me to have that image" (Source: Sorensen, Chris. "Ted's Way." *Toronto Star*. Saturday, May 24th, 2008: B1). Ted Rogers believed everybody would want a mobile telephone one day, and he has been proven correct by the millions of Rogers mobile phone users in Canada.

Like Rogers, I hoped that my dissertation research would benefit people. I hope that my research provides a basis for understanding how political communication and media technologies are changing federal politics. Living in a social democratic society that has both private and public support for research like my project is truly a privilege, one that I hope many more people will experience and foster like the Rogers family.

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I am not entirely certain how to thank my parents, grandparents, and siblings for feeding me books from a very young age, and for their on-going help and support during this journey. I will simply suggest to them the following: please read the dedication on the next page.

## Dedication

For Rebecca, Joseph Junior, James Douglas Angus, and Gemma.

Now you will know what I was doing hiding away from you all in Toronto.

You are all dearly loved, and your uncle apologizes for the extended absences.
You were so lucky in the parent draw (as were your parents).

You make us proud every single day.

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**Prefatory Pages:**

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ACF | - Advocacy Coalition Framework |
| A.I.D.S. | - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| CCF | - Co-operative Commonwealth Federation |
| CPC | - Conservative Party of Canada |
| CRTC | - Canada Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission |
| DOD | - Department of Defence |
| EMR | - Department of Energy, Mines and Resources |
| FM | - False Majority government |
| GATT | - General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade |
| HoC | - House of Commons |
| IC | - Industry Canada |
| ICT | - Information and communication technology |
| IIGR | - Institute of Intergovernmental Relations (Queen's University) |
| IT | - Information Technology |
| JFK | - John Fitzgerald Kennedy (Former U.S. President) |
| KWIC | - Key Word In Context |
| LPC | - Liberal Party of Canada |
| MEPs | - Media Event Proposals |
| MP | - Member of Parliament |
| MG | - Minority Government |
| NDP | - New Democratic Party |
| NRA | - National Rifle Association |
| N.E.P. | - National Energy Program |
| PC | - Progressive Conservative |
| PCO | - Office of the Privy Council |
| PM | - Prime Minister |
| PMB | - Private Members' Bill |
| PMO | - Prime Minister's Office |
| PR | - Public Relations |
| NAFTA | - North American Free Trade Agreement |
| NATO | - North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| ROC | - Rest of Canada |
| SC | - Social Credit |
| SFT | - Speech from the Throne |
| TAPoR | - Text Analysis Portal |
| TM | - True Majority government |
| TVO | - Television Ontario (Cable Station) |
| UN | - United Nations |
| UNESCO | - United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization |
| U.S. | - United States of America |
| WWW | - World Wide Web (or the "Web") |
| WWI | - World War I |
| WWII | - World War II |

In the Age of Information, media such as the telegraph, television, press, photo, radio and film are in themselves new natural resources increasing the wealth of the community. In the Age of Information, the moving of information is by many times the largest business in the world.

- Marshall McLuhan (*Counterblast*, 1969)

## Introduction

> …my Health Minister can be trusted with the welfare of thirty-five million people, but not with a pen and paper because he's too flaky.
> – Rick Mercer, *The Rick Mercer Report* (2006)

> The point is that officials in the Prime Minister's Office in both Canada and Britain think that they can help themselves to a department or an agency's programs to serve their own partisan political interests. We do not differentiate how elected politicians and their political advisers should deal with department and agencies with respect to their purpose, their legislated mandate, and the degree to which program requirements are outlined in statutes, and this enables them to walk through government departments, picking up items at will. The fact that government has moved away from formal processes and requirements has also made it easier for elected politicians to do this, particularly prime ministers and their courtiers. Still, prime ministers are held in check by the possibility that using their power improperly could well generate bad publicity.
> – Donald J. Savoie's *Court Government* (2008, p. 315)

This dissertation takes up Donald Savoie's call in *Governing from the Centre* (1999) and *Court Government and the Collapse of Accountability in Canada and the United Kingdom* (2008) for a better description of the centralization of power in the prime minister's office (PMO). The research project focuses on the PMO's agenda-setting strategies and the corresponding framing language used in its political communications in order to answer the main research question: 'how do Canadian prime ministers presiding over minority governments continue to rule as if they have a majority?' The importance of investigating this topic can be found directly in the problem that Savoie's work began to diagnose in 1999.

Savoie saw a clear challenge to the traditional balance of executive and parliament powers was developing in Canada because the partisan PMO's influence had grown over the last half century, from just a few secretaries to more than thirty officers and their nearly one hundred support staff members, all of whom had little or no constitutional or political framework to check their reach into other areas of governance.

Scant research exists on what impact the PMO's expansion has had on its agenda setting capacity, its control of government, and how to protect or maintain parliamentary democracy from its growth, especially during minority government situations. Canadians in general have little experience with minority governments, even though such unstable power configurations have, perhaps surprisingly for many outside of political scientists, become commonplace since 2004, with the lone Martin (2004-2006) and two Harper (2006-2011) governments.

To address this problem systematically, the main research question is answered by exploring what scholars have written about agenda-setting research and by conducting frames analysis to identify the language developed by political parties to influence and set the national agenda for their key issues during the three elections and ensuing governments from 2004 to 2011.

This dissertation's main thesis is that the Harper Conservatives were able to stay in power for over five years by cleverly manipulating the agenda through framing and reframing issues to their advantage, namely to deal with voter segmentation by galvanizing their base and attracting new voters in each successive election. The increased PMO was able to spin and measure the impact of their policy announcements through framing their policy messages to divide their opposition, while simultaneously attracting voters who were marketed to as consumers. The Conservatives strategically targeting segments of the electorate, like the key voting blocks of middle class families and senior citizens, that are known to show up to vote on election day.

The prime minister has the final executive decision on party and government political communications; he or she is, therefore, the leading arbiter of the messages

delivered to represent key party agenda-setting strategies. Harper has especially been acknowledged as a shrewd strategist, but how different were his techniques from that of previous minority government prime ministers' agenda-setting approaches?

Savoie's work has not addressed what role a larger PMO has in controlling and framing political communications during minority governments. He focussed chiefly on majority government periods. In *Governing from the Centre*, Savoie asserted that it was a key failing of contemporary politicians not to reform the centralization of power in the PMO:

> The failure of our politicians to see or admit that the prime minister has become the key actor who can make government change course has led them to search for solutions where none exist, to spend public funds when it is not necessary, and to ignore areas where solutions may exist. In fact, some of the solutions embraced have not only been expensive, they have been counterproductive. They have slowed down decision making, unnecessarily complicated matters, and made it more difficult to chart a new course. (Savoie, 1999, p. 8)

Interestingly, Savoie did not directly describe contemporary agenda-setting literature in either of his works on the important issue of how the PMO maintains power. Investigations such as John Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy* (1995) or Stuart Soroka's *Agenda-setting Dynamics in Canada* (2002) are of key importance for addressing the centralization of power in the PMO, though neither of them discussed minority governments. Kingdon's work focused on American government, and Soroka's was published before Canada's post-millennium fragile minority period.

Kingdon and Soroka's works complement Savoie's insights about anti-democratic agenda-setting institutional formations, however, because they offered clear accounts of the rational choice model being used in government, where limited resources must be channelled to fulfill clearly articulated agendas that the media and public would support.

Kingdon's work in particular aligned agenda setting as a means for opening policy windows through the use of targeted language that differentiates political parties and their policies from one another. Kingdon defined the term "agenda" as follows:

> The agenda, as I conceive of it, is the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time... Out of the set of all conceivable subjects or problems to which officials could be paying attention, they do in fact seriously attend to some rather than others. So the agenda-setting process narrows this set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention. (Kingdon, 1984, p. 3)

In essence, the agenda-setting process is a means of focusing attention, which today is of key importance in a highly media-saturated political environment.

Controlled language and communication practices are used by governments to adjust "policy windows" to accommodate their agenda because the wording of a policy allows support to be garnered based on connotations and common associations for the ways that words are interpreted by a majority of people—fundamentally, the use of language allows for party policies to appear to be leaning left or right on any given issue to gain popular support, even if the actual policy is designed to be completely partisan in nature. This tactic has arguably led the members of the electorate to vote against their interests if they believe the message over the actual policy content, for example, U.S. President George Bush's policies that placed national security above human rights and individual freedoms after 9/11 (Lakoff, 2004; 2007).

Not all scholars have agreed with Savoie's centralization thesis, and other arguments must first be considered to broadly sketch the problematic of centralized power being maintained through the PMO's agenda setting strategies.

Graham White's *Cabinets and First Ministers* (2005) markedly agreed with much of Savoie's criticism of government in *Governing from the Centre*, but did identify a few problem areas. White noted that Savoie underestimated the amount of power centralized under the PMO, because Savoie did not fully address the hold the PMO has had over routine policy processes. For instance, White described how the PMO can use its larger issue monitoring resources to immediately step in to control many areas of government when new issues arise on its radar, thereby breaking the public service's routine policy plans and schedules: "This control is tied to the influence of the pollsters and media spin doctors at the prime minister's service through the PMO and the government party" (White, 2005, p. 67).

White also widened Savoie's PMO executive "centre" by including "ministerial political staff and the deputy ministers of line departments" as extensions of the PMO's agenda monitoring network (White, 2005, p. 18). He argued that Savoie missed those important institutions in the definition of the centre, and White called this wider centre the "core executive." White seized the core executive as an important concept and extension of Savoie's centre because a wider centre further problematizes the reach of the PMO in using agenda-setting techniques to control policy development and implementation. Particularly, Cabinet, the Office of the Privy Council (PCO), and line departments are the primary channels that must be harnessed to fulfill any prime minister's agenda. Without having direct command lines and accountability, agendas can fall apart during the process of problem recognition and identification on the way to policy implementation in the policy cycle (White, 2005; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003).

Beyond Savoie's centralization thesis, White's description of a larger core

executive presents a second thesis: the hollowing out of the State, thus limiting a prime minister's reach for authoritative actions and agenda setting. White explained how some scholars believe the hollowing out of the federal government has occurred in the core executive because of the "growing constraints on the capacity of the nation-state represented by transnational economic and political institutions" (White, 2005, p. 19). This second thesis depicts the decentralization of power away from the PMO, which is found in examples where the federal government downloads responsibilities to the provinces (e.g. Smith, 2005), or is limited by international institutions and policies (e.g. Weller, Bakvis, & Rhodes, 1997).

The argument can be made, however, that these limitations on power have developed as a consequence of prime ministerial decisions. For example, Mulroney's agenda of developing and agreeing to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would be an example of trading off some sovereign power for long-term prosperity through cooperative international partnerships. In this way, the latter decentralization thesis mirrors each prime minister's style towards a strict centralized executive federalism, or a decentralized brokered power approach. To be certain, some limiting powers have arisen in recent years because of neo-liberal forces that became entrenched in "the increasing webs of interest groups, the shift away from traditional governmental structures to new modes of governance such as privatization, alternate service delivery mechanisms, special operating agencies, […] and the growing constraints on the capacity of the nation-state represented by transnational economic and political institutions" (White, 2005, p. 19).

Another major limiting factor would include the increase in regional Canadian

political culture that has made it difficult for any majority government to be voted into power. The Quebec question has challenged Canadian federalism since Confederation, but new regional forces like Western alienation have challenged the East's power base since the turn of the millennium. These regional forces are represented in modern Canadian cabinet formations.

In Bernier, Brownsey, and Howlett's edited volume on *Executive Styles in Canada* (2005), the binary centralization/decentralization argument is developed into a broader spectrum of potential leadership styles ranging from a "prime minister-centred cabinet," to an "institutionalized cabinet," and an "unaided or departmental cabinet" (Bernier, Brownsey, and Howlett, 2005, p. 7). Functionally each of these executive styles has existed in Canada at the federal and provincial levels to respond to different needs. The models have developed through a process of "evolutionary institutionalism," as Stefan Dupré and Christopher Dunn described it, where the original unaided cabinet was used by first ministers due to conventions of party collegiality, limited resources, and the delegation of responsibility within hierarchical forms of power. Later, as bureaucracies grew in the '60s and '70s, the institutionalized model developed where ministers were given a distinct degree of autonomy in terms of their power over portfolios.

Their work identified Savoie's research (depicted above) as describing the prime minister-centred cabinet in terms of the PMO's centralization. A fourth model was also identified in a premier-centred cabinet that mirrors Savoie's federal model. Overall, the authors concluded that a first minister's executive dominance was based on:

> the continued success of the governing party at the polls, and the ability of [first ministers] to retain the support of their party machinery and caucus. Without such support, a first minister can often rule only very uneasily without being able to ensure that his or her initiatives will be successfully translated into policy

or law. (Bernier, Brownsey, and Howlett, 2005, p. 245)

If their analyses of federal and provincial governments are correct, then how is it that these conditions have been maintained by Harper during minority government rule, which is by nature unstable?

The limiting forces on prime ministerial power during minority governments must be reflected in the government's stated agenda to some degree. Harper's new political communication strategies to ensure policy windows were opened for the Conservative agenda included the narrowing of agendas, promoting wedge issues, priming voters using distracter frames, and using consistently strict media communication protocols (e.g. Kozolanka, 2009). Harper also notably employed no less than five communication directors in four years, which may perhaps be an indication of his demands for succinct, yet changing messaging strategies, and learning new skills for controlling the agenda in today's dynamic networked media environment (Akin, 2010).

Hazell and Paun's *Making Minority Government Work* (2009) labelled Canada's post-millennial minority governments as "dysfunctional", especially in comparison to New Zealand and Scotland's, because of the Canadian prime minister's willingness to lead as if they still had a majority, forcing opposition parties to support their agendas through non-confidence vote brinkmanship. Little evidence was offered to support these claims in terms of whether policy passed or if government outlays achieved their goals. With hindsight, the Harper Conservatives would definitely argue that their minority government sessions were successful given that they led to their first majority in 2011.

Further research is, therefore, required of this period to understand the mechanisms of power in Canadian minority governments. To explain the essential

agenda-setting processes clearly, evidence-based research methods are used in this dissertation to identify how the partisan competition of framing language lends itself to opening and using policy windows to maintain power in minority settings.

## Research Questions

1) How have Canadian prime ministers presiding over minority governments communicated their policy agenda in order to continue to rule as if they have a majority?

2) What do scholars think about agenda setting, and the abilities of governments to differentiate their messages from their political opposition?

3) How do agendas differ among the parties? Specifically, is there evidence of shared "issue framing" among the parties in terms of overlapping policy agendas, or is there evidence that instead identifies uses of strict agenda setting that differentiates the ruling party from the opposition?

4) Do the frames identified using textual analyses of direct party propaganda resonate in other communication sectors like the news media or *Hansard*?

## Thesis

If scholars and observers are correct in their evaluations about the centralization of power in the PMO's office, then we should be able to identify the extent of the PMO's agenda-setting power reflected in the top political party agenda issues that successfully become policy. In other words, either the centralization of agendas or the decentralization of agendas will be reflected consistently in political party documents, like platforms (chapter five), election websites (chapter six), Throne Speeches, prime ministers' speeches, and budget outlays (chapter seven), and *Hansard* (chapter eight and nine). Empirical research, therefore, is needed to demonstrate whether or not the governing

party's agendas are narrower in scope under contemporary minority governments and how the agenda is used to maintain power.

If the ruling party's agenda continues to be supported by the House, then this fact demonstrates how creating "safe" agendas that can be completed based on public opinion and media support is one of the main strategies for maintaining power in minority government settings. However, if collaborative or cooperative models of issue frames analysis are identified, then "working together" and decentralization in minority government will have been established to some degree. This latter phenomenon should not be expected given the track record of minority government under Conservative rule described above, and instead, I hypothesize that Savoie's centralization thesis will be reflected in the agenda-setting power of the PMO through a strict use of language frames and controlled policy announcements to push legislation through the House.

**Methodology**

This project offers the first computer-assisted textual analysis of (i) the federal partisan platforms and websites during the minority government elections (2004-2008); (ii) prime ministers' speeches from 2004-2010, to document whether or not issue framing resonance from the PMO permeates into the media and popular support (or if the media sets the agenda first); and uses two case studies (iii) *Hansard* on gun control issues from 1995-2010, and the 2008 "coalition government" debate, documenting two on-going controversial policy issues where the frames have changed several times. This focus on Canadian federal political agenda-setting tactics is unique because it employs new digital humanities methods to identify the repetitive framing language represented in "key word"

issue units to better understand how agendas are constructed and fulfilled over time by a highly centralized PMO. Key words, like “wait time guarantees” (a health care issue frame in the 2004 and 2006 election), “tough on crime” (a 2006 Conservative platform frame), or “scrap the gun registry” (another consistent Conservative frame from 2004-2011), can now easily be tracked in digital documents to find the significant uses of such agenda-setting language and frames that have led to the creation of official policies.

Three main complementary methods are used in this project to answer the research question of how partisan agenda-setting success affects the opening and closing of policy windows; the methods include (i) automated frequency distribution tracking in digital texts (e.g. Marres, 2006; Rogers, 2004), and (ii) Key Word In Context searches (KWIC, e.g. Schreibman, Siemens, & Unsworth, 2004). This type of research has not been previously conducted on minority governments in the digital age in Canada, especially from a multiple-party perspective. This project, therefore, updates both agenda-setting and framing research in the Canadian context by linking the two together via digital analysis methods.

Richard Rogers’ ground breaking *Information Politics on the Web* (2004) was among the first to describe new methods for tracking political issues online in the digital era. He created a digital “issue barometer” to monitor “the new attention stream” of online media (Rogers, 2004, p. 138). His barometer was constructed using the top issues directly listed in the agendas of party platforms developed during the Dutch national election of 2001. During the campaign, he tracked a “bag” or “basket” of top issues in the top three newspapers online to understand how the top issues connected and separated the representation of partisan interests in the media.

He described the issue selection process as follows: “These are issue key words (singlets and couplets) that are specific enough, terminologically, to stand out from broader topics in large collections of press articles” (Rogers, 2004, p. 139). His key word examples included categorizing terms like “waiting lists” as an issue under the topic of “health care” – using such terms, he could see if “waiting lists” as an issue was only developing in stories on health care, or if that issue was a spillover issue into other areas, such as economic or social policy. He could empirically demonstrate such tendencies by tracing the frequency of mentions in newspaper articles. In this way, his method established the level of partisan frames resonating in the media: “Resonance per issue is defined, straightforwardly, as frequency of mentions of the issue terms per newspaper and across newspapers” (Rogers, 2004, p. 139).

Importantly, his “bag theory” of issue tracking is not a standard Aristotelian top-down content analysis. Instead, the issue itself is used to find the stories using the new search term features of online media and news analysis such as Google’s search heuristics or the use of Key Word In Context functions (or KWIC). Such methods of searching returns a network of articles brought together by the issue (and/or its key term), instead of selecting the articles and then coding them using predefined categories searching for the term. He explained the process as follows:

> Here we do not know in advance where issues belong, whether they should be pre-classified according to the subjects dealt with by the newspaper desks, by the library science classification schemes, or, as mentioned, by the division of issue responsibility by individual ministers. We prefer to allow the issues to shape the categorizations; we only know that we should follow the current terms, watching whether they stick themselves to ministries and parties, as well as other issues. Thus our *issue stream* will be without a prior classification scheme apart from currency and attention. (*emphasis added*; Rogers, 2004, p. 139)

Rogers' techniques are used for the first time on Canadian political elections in this dissertation, but this work also extends the use of his methods by using frames analysis techniques to understand prime ministerial agenda-setting techniques that shape and control the attention cycle of issues in the "issue stream".

How does an agenda issue travel from formulation through to implementation in minority government? Once a successful frame is set, does it remain consistent enough over time to lead to the creation of a policy?

These questions can be answered using Rogers' research method by employing the following procedural steps:

1) **ISSUE SELECTION** (Key word tracking): Identifying issues of importance from each party platform and election campaign website using key word frequency analysis.

2) **ISSUE TRACKING** (Macro changes over time): Tracking the frequency of the issues (or key terms), as selected in step one above, through a variety of political objects that are linked to key actors over time, so as to document how important each issue is in terms of attention during an election. Agenda setting researchers call this measuring "issue salience" (Soroka, 2002).

3) **FRAMING LANGUAGE** (Micro changes over time): When high salience appears for a given issue, the key term representing the issue can be data-mined in key documents using Key Word In Context searches (KWIC) to focus on the language and understand how the issues are framed by different parties, as well as the reasons why key actors are pushing the issue. It takes time for a frame to be absorbed by the media and the public, so consistent messaging is required, which allows researchers to track issues over time and notice changes via their frequency and dominance across information objects.

Using this three-step method, the prime minister's agenda can be compared to that of the other political parties to document empirically whether or not issues are shared among the parties, and whether or not concessions are made by the ruling party to garner support for populist issues during key moments in elections and in Throne Speeches. Such

questions can be answered through the use of this method simply because language comes before policy is crafted.

To establish whether or not agendas are successful, the stated policy aims of the government are compared with the final outputs in the form of bills completed on the federal government website – see the following e-address: http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/bills.asp?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=40&Ses=2 (Government of Canada, 2010). Success of completing an agenda is thereby established by whether or not policy is passed by the House. In this way, both the prevalence and dominance of the PMO's and opposition party's messages are compared along with the official output of the government. The product of the government in terms of laws, programs, and final outlays are described in terms of whether or not opposition parties have had effective input into the minority government process through framing language.

If Harper has been able to pass legislation due to a disciplined and effective agenda-setting technique, then this outcome would help demonstrate the centralization of his power in the PMO through dominant communication strategies.

Rogers' methods allow researchers to identify new frames that emerge in the relationship between key word frequencies and issues by using such e-tools as co-occurrence or KWIC searches on the sample. Rogers' findings demonstrated how terminology is politicized and switches frames over time in a network. He found that "populist" issues came to dominate the election throughout the campaign and the parties with the most media-savvy used the media to garner attention to their issues through the framing language (Rogers, 2004, p. 173). His findings offered the insight into agenda-setting research that issues require the support of government, media, and the public to

become salient to influence party agendas and policy creation.

Overall, Rogers' "issue network" analysis affords researchers the means for recognizing the source of a frame and how the frame comes to dominate the media's attention cycle over time. His "issue unit" studies allow scholars to combine agenda-setting and frame analysis into a mixed methodology. For this reason, his method will be used in this study.

Similar to Rogers, Noortje Marres (2006) argued that "issue networks" can be tracked online using a study of "issue units" which are, at the most basic, key terms or words that represent issues – like "gun control" (or its synonyms, like "firearms control"). Marres asserted that information communication technology helps to facilitate online study of issue networks because of new digital tools and the ubiquity of digital documents. The benefits of tracking issue networks through media documents and through social networks are: (i) that people are connected to one another "by way of the particular issue with which it is concerned" (Marres, 2006, p. 6), and (ii) that it draws attention to how issue formation and formatting are a part of civil society politics (Marres, 2006, p. 7). This dissertation tests this thesis by employing new online methods of analysis and comparing them to the results of previous descriptive analyses concerning the issues selected.

Each set of documents is analysed using the HyperPo software to create keyword lists. The lists were refined into rankings of frequency and lists of the top issues using HyperPo's Key Word In Context (KWIC) function. Other software is used to complement the HyperPo analysis, and to establish the validity of its results. Overall, the primacy of the prime minister's agenda can be confirmed using these methods by

documenting whether or not the government's agenda is influenced by the frames of the other party over time.

Theorists argue that, if political actors can influence the dominant narrative frames circulating in the media concerning any particular issue, their agenda has a greater chance of being supported by the public, especially during elections (Clifton, 2008; Hart et al., 2005; Lakoff, 2004; 2007; Lewis, 2005). This is called the voter choice model where issues differentiate one party from another through their platforms and political communication. The new methods and research that focuses on "issue units", described above, allows researchers to track issues as representative of agendas and linguistic frames that originate over time from specific actors (Rogers, 2004; Marres, 2006). Rogers' "issue barometer" method of quantifying key words allows the issue to be the unit of analysis that brings together actors, instead of preselecting groups and issues to track and identify.

This method has been used in Canada successfully at Ryerson University's Infoscape Research Lab to track the discussion of important political issues in the media collected through the Google News online aggregator (Elmer, Skinner & Devereaux, 2006), and issues in the blogosphere (Elmer, Langlois, Devereaux, Ryan, McKelvey, Redden, & Curlew, 2009; Elmer, Ryan, Devereaux, Langlois, McKelvey & Redden, 2007). However, the techniques have yet to be used on an in-depth study of minority government, agenda-setting techniques, and from a multiple party perspective.

In chapter six, this data is broken down into weekly and monthly increments to document the changes in agenda-setting words over time, and the websites and platforms are analysed in a similar way to identify the highest repeating phrases and frames

concerning each party's selected issues. Once the top issues are identified, tracking them across political documents to demonstrate resonance and dominance can also be demonstrated. As described above, other methods will be used to identify frame changes and media correlations in this dissertation, including quantifying institutional communications, relative frequency comparisons, and the KWIC methodology; they will be discussed at the necessary times in chapters five through seven.

Overall, these methods are relatively new because of the advent of digital technologies, but they are capable now of readily revealing trends in political documents. The question arises though, how can they establish the agenda-setting power of minority governments in particular? Simply put, automated textual analysis can, like discourse analysis, present the objective messages found in political documents, answering the questions who spoke the most, what was said the most often, and in what documents top issues and messages appeared consistently or repetitively. Establishing agenda-setting power and techniques of message control of minority governments, therefore, can be demonstrated by following the words.

These methods, rooted in Marres and Rogers' work, also allow researchers to pinpoint the origination of issues being attended to by the media during key political events. They demonstrate the impact that key events like the release of a party platform or an election debate can have on focusing the media's eye on particular issues. This dissertation uses these relatively new methods for the first time on Canadian federal politics to see if Rogers' findings translate to the Canadian political sphere. Do Canadian political parties choose populist issues to garner media and public support? Or do they

provide clear platform visions that set the agenda and are then taken up in the media to influence the popular support (thereby demonstrating leadership)?

Rogers' work also offers a contrast to the older work of Stuart Soroka's *Agenda-setting Dynamics in Canada* (2002), which used the method of traditional content analysis to track multiple government issues in *Hansard* and the media. In dialogue with Soroka's work, this dissertation argues that the cultural and interpretational qualities of language might make even long-term empirical studies of multiple issues extremely difficult for leading to stable findings using quantitative means alone, particularly controversial issues like gun control. Simply counting static or unchanging predefined classifications of words over a long period, as Soroka's content analysis did, missed cultural and linguistic changes due to real world events.

Methodological problems arise concerning the irreducibility of language to numbers when surprising changes in issue frames occur because of world events. For example, Soroka's method definitely missed the particular changes in agenda-setting frames on gun control in Canada after the Montréal Polytechnique shootings on December 6, 1989, from "gun licensing" to "gun control" and eventually a "gun registry" for public safety (Cukier, Thomlinson, & Cairns, 2008). The Progressive Conservative government of Kim Campbell's focused on those issues, but the issues would not necessarily have been captured by following the words Soroka selected in a content analysis. His "crime" analysis units tracked the key words "crime", "criminal", "murder", "murderer", "rape", "rapist", "robbery", "robber", "theft", and "thief" in both English and French media to identify the frequency of their agenda setting uses (Soroka, 2002, p. 133). Category confusion would have occurred because "gun control" is not the same

thing as “murder” in a standard content analysis.

In another more recent example, Soroka’s method would have also missed the change of security issue frames that occurred in the U.S. after 9/11 where “National Defence” became “Homeland Security” (Lakoff, 2004), which similarly influenced Canada’s national security policy frames at the time. The methodological issue here is that agenda setting language changes over time, and different frames appear that might not be captured in larger samples of data that use static categories. In both of these cases, sensational and institutional issues aligned to redefine policy landscapes in often controversial and drastic ways almost overnight.

Fixed analytical categories would have difficulty measuring new issues or might miss them completely outright because the new linguistic terms arose outside of the study period’s lexicon. While Rogers’ work lacks the depth of Soroka’s longer ten-year content analysis, it attributes a finer degree and nuance of framing language analysis. Rogers’ issue bag methods instead allow issues to self-identify through the changing frequency of the repetitive framing language that rises above other frames, and for that reason his methods are adopted here.

Overall, digital tools and methods allow researchers to pinpoint the origination of key language frames for any policy put forth that is captured in digital print. After all, language describing a policy must first appear somewhere before an actual policy exists; methods that track agenda-setting issues allow researchers to find and establish whose words are used to bring a policy forward. What words do they use? Rogers’ issue barometer offers the means to identify such changes of rhetoric over time and therefore answer the pressing and instrumental questions concerning how agenda setting power in

the PMO is used to open and control policy windows. The digital methods also importantly operationalize and automate theories and modes of textual analysis that previously would have taken a vast amount of labour and time to coordinate an understanding of the primary actors and their tactics in terms of agenda setting.

**Chapter Breakdown**

The next chapter reviews the extent literature on agenda-setting and frames analysis to better understand the relationship between the media attention cycle and the policy cycle. It then describes in detail the framework and methods that are employed throughout this dissertation to track issues within the several selected documents, as identified above, that are the products of national political communication strategies.

Chapter two describes how the structure and size of the PMO has grown to 107 staff members with roughly 20 executive officers. The institutional and organizational analysis helps demonstrate how the PMO's capabilities to overreach into previously untouched PCO areas of agenda setting support and policy analysis have come about since the 1970s.

Chapters three and four focus on past minority governments and how agenda setting has been used successfully prior to the contemporary period. Chapter three articulates the early modern framing strategies of Mackenzie King that became known as the King-Byng affair, when King successfully framed Meighen as a British loyalist attempting to usurp power through undemocratic conventions. Chapter four investigates the modern post-WWII minority government prime ministers of Diefenbaker, Pearson, Trudeau, and Clark, each has lessons that can be useful in the present century. Each

chapter reviews the past prime ministers' successes and failures in setting and maintaining their agendas with a critical reading of how new technology enabled or stymied their endeavours.

In chapter five, the millennium's minority governments are examined, first through an examination of the top salient issues selected based on the issue frames set by the English-speaking party election platforms. Chapter six next focuses on the partisan websites during the three elections that led to the creation of minority governments since 2004 (the 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections, specifically). The bag of issues, as Rogers would call it, that are compiled in these analyses is assessed in terms of each party's stated agenda, and then the top issues are used for comparison throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

In chapter seven, the top issues identified in the previous chapters are compared with detailed studies of the federal Throne Speeches and the media to establish which model of agenda setting best describes the past three minority governments (i.e. centralized or decentralized; monarchical or collaborative). Martin and Harper's public speeches and the outcomes of each government are also assessed.

The study of the consistent use of language is evident in Harper's addresses that were used to sell his agenda in 2006, which concurrently also demonstrates a through line to the policies he has pushed through the House.

However, Martin's speeches do not register in terms of a strict agenda when compared to the "bag of issues" identified in chapters five and six. In the objects studied, a spectrum of tactics is therefore evident from the very broad agendas of 2004 and 2008 to the focused Harper agenda of 2006, which is a definite standout among the three

English-speaking parties. The insight gained from this research is that if agenda-setting skills are now a dominant component of new media politicking, then Canadians have come to respect and support political leaders who do what they say they are going to do.

To complement the broad overviews in chapter seven, chapter eight and nine each focus on one single controversial policy issue in *Hansard*: gun control as represented in the Canada Firearms Act (chapter eight) and the Coalition Government crisis (chapter nine). The case study of gun control follows a controversial policy topic that has been on-going since the 1990s, which consecutive governments have not been able to completely close the policy window on satisfactorily. The gun control issue can be viewed as a minor sub-issue of the larger Harper government's "Tough On Crime" agenda item, which was the Conservative government's fifth key priority based on their 2006 election campaign (see chapter five for more about their 2006 platform).

Using Kingdon's agenda-setting terminology, the gun control case study is a key example for the difficulty of framing non-routinized policy agenda items. It also documents the methodological difficulties that arise in using fixed category content analyses for tracking some policy issues using traditional methods. In particular, problems arise in that the frames for controversial policies can change quickly because often parties are struggling to create discursive solutions that the media or public will accept; this methodological issue makes it difficult for traditional content analysis methods to capture the nuances of the changing frames over time.

Lastly, in chapter nine, another single issue comparison is made using the "anti-Coalition Government" framing that Harper crafted during the 2008 election. Like chapter eight, this chapter again uses *Hansard* and media accounts to document how the

framing occurred, and addresses the Conservatives' "anti-Coalition" frame's success in courting voters. Again, the question is asked, 'how is the agenda situated in terms of the key frames representing the government and opposition parties?' And, why did voters accept one frame over another?

**Scope**

In terms of limiting scope, I only study the Conservatives, Liberals, and New Democrat parties that held seats in the House during the 2004-2011 periods, because their agendas were consistently focused with the aim of building unitary national majorities with representation in every province and territory. Consequently, I do not focus on the Bloc Quebecois in this study. As well, I only focus on English-language documents in order to keep the focus manageable. Agenda setting is highly linguistically and culturally sensitive, and parties set agendas slightly differently in English and French in terms of priority and in terms of vocabulary. Another study examining agenda setting in French, and indeed a third study comparing "frames" will be left on order.

In terms of data, the scope used for tracking issues in each object of study is listed as follows:

1) **Elections 2004, 2006, and 2008 –Platforms and Websites:** The party platforms are analysed to understand the level of salience among shared partisan issues. The priority issues listed and tracked in the platforms are then compared to the political parties' websites during the elections to understand any differences in framing.

2) **Throne Speeches 2004-2010:** Next, the top issues for each English-speaking party with seats in the House for each election year are tracked in Martin's single Throne Speech and Harper's five Throne Speeches to see if any significant issue traction is evident as compared to their stated election promises. Salience is measured solely based on frequency to identify changes in issues among the

speeches and the party agendas.

3) **The Media 2004-2010:** The issues are next compared to the coverage of the Throne Speeches one week before and after each speech in the three top Canadian newspapers based on circulation (i.e. *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, and *The Toronto Star*). This study documents issue salience and resonance over time again using a Pearson Chi Square measurement of the frequency of mention.

4) **Prime Minister Speeches 2004-2010:** The same issues are then compared to top issues in Martin and Harper's nearly 400 speeches (Harper had 315 and Martin 54, not including Throne Speeches), again using the same methods. This study provides the evidence of whether or not the same frames continued from their platforms, through the Throne Speeches, and into their formal government duties.

5) ***Hansard*:** The House debates are studied in-depth for frames analysis concerning two key issues, first the Canada Firearms Act in particular from 1995-2008, and then the "Coalition Government" debates in 2008-2010. The scope for the first issue is limited to that period because the frames remain relatively stable after 2008, in that the Conservative party continued pressing their wish to "scrap the long gun registry", while the other parties hoped to save it, with the exception of a few rural MPs. An update of further action on the Act after the 2008 sample is also presented descriptively.

These objects are all highly scripted and controlled partisan communications that are vetted and re-vetted prior to being released for public consumption; it is difficult to imagine what aspects of political or bureaucratic life are not controlled or scripted in the present media environment, beyond perhaps closed door Cabinet or PMO meetings to which few have access. Given this context, these objects can viewed as clear records of the political parties' agenda-setting language and tactics.

These objects therefore represent the thoughts, actions, and messages of key actors in a public choice political model (Miljan, 2008), including (i) party propaganda from the Federal party websites, (ii) the government's official debates in House of Commons (Throne Speeches and *Hansard*), (iv) the media, and (v) the public sector. Media articles and public opinion polls already exist for these periods (see: CORA, 2010; Pammett & Dornan, 2004; 2006; 2008; Page, 2006), and those sources can help to

complete the picture of how issue frames circulate and resonant in all aspects of the public choice model linking agenda-setting tactics with democratic policy formation. This link changes agenda-setting research from its previous focus of identifying how partisan actors have selected key priorities and issues to dominant the national agenda, to the "why" and "how" parties communicate a national vision for the practical purpose of applying language to create electoral support to construct and maintain a majority. Agenda setting is, therefore, scripted communication for the purpose of achieving and directing power.

As Rick Mercer's satire reminds us, the centralization of power in the PMO and consequently its control of communications in setting agendas are two key concerns for democratic politics and open communication for the entire Canadian public, not just for politicians, political junkies, theorists, and the media. A practical evaluation of the current agenda-setting strategies in the minority government era is a much needed project at this time because if Savoie's diagnosis is correct, then reforms are required to correct the power imbalance centred in the PMO. Analysing agenda-setting strategies will offer credence to whether or not a centralized PMO has been better able to implement its policies over time. This dissertation serves this need by documenting the uses of language by the PMO and identifies how agenda-setting tactics have come to dominate partisan politics in the digital age of the permanent campaign and reinforced the office of the prime minister. This research is situated at the intersection where the power and leadership of the prime minister meets the constraints of agenda setting resources, and where new methodologies challenge (or confirm) the work of previous scholars who have studied executive styles in Canada.

## Chapter One
## Agenda-Setting and Frames Analysis in Question

> I was – and am – deeply disappointed that I wasn't able to conclude the agenda I had laid out for myself in government.
>
> – Paul Martin, *Hell or High Water* (2009, p. 457)

> […] a Conservative Government must align itself tactically in Parliament with different parties or segments of parties over different issues. Harper played this game successfully in his first year in office […]. When the writ is dropped, it is crucial for Conservatives to be able to say that many of their policies have at least some degree of support from one or more other parties. However, once the writ is dropped it is equally important for the Conservatives to have platform positions that polarize against all the other parties—to represent the only conservative alternative against the welter of other parties.
>
> – Tom Flanagan, *Harper's Team* (2009, p. 275)

In agenda-setting parlance, even Martin's post-political career biography *Hell or High Water* could be viewed as an attempt to help set the policy agenda as a part of what theorist John Kingdon called defining "the political stream" (Kingdon, 1984). Martin's admission clearly showed that he realized that he did not define the political stream and that this failure caused the Liberal defeat that ended thirteen years in power. In the 2006 election, the Harper Conservatives framed Martin's agenda as unrealistic in terms of its costs and argued it was cynically designed to buy Canadian votes with false and expensive promises. Why did this frame attract voters and help install the Conservatives in power?

Tom Flanagan's *Harper's Team* provided insights into how the Harper government has used agenda-setting tactics to control the political stream, once in government. He pointed to the example of the Quebec motion that was framed as follows, "[T]his House recognizes that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada" (Government of Canada, 2006). The wording of this message made it such that both the Bloc Quebecois and the Liberals had to support the Conservative solution by

framing the stasis point of the on-going national unity issue in terms of recognizing "Québécois nationhood". The separatist Bloc could not be viewed to be voting against any statement of Quebec's nationhood, or else their supporters would question the party's commitment to sovereignty. Similarly, the Liberals could not create any better counter frame, while simultaneously gaining Liberal support in Quebec over that of their competitors' frames; like the Bloc they were forced to save face by voting for the motion (and not necessarily because they agreed with it fully).

This chapter first discusses and reviews the contemporary analyses of agenda-setting and framing research to better understand what has changed in contemporary minority governments strategies. The review establishes that an agenda-setting framework captures the changes in the PMO's approach and shows how it controls priorities within parliamentary democracies. An updated agenda-setting framework is needed to explore the problem of centralization in parliamentary democracy. The field's research models describe the methods and processes that politicians use to maintain power, but they have not been adequately modernized to include the minority government era in Canada. Researchers can better identify whether or not the agenda process is centralized or decentralized, bureaucratic or democratic, by refining the theoretical frameworks based on empirical evidence.

In short, the following theoretical review provides the context for understanding how the Harper minority government has employed new agenda-setting and framing techniques to maintain power as compared to previous federal governments. The descriptive analyses are compared to the findings of the empirical results throughout the dissertation to determine, discover, and expose his new agenda techniques, thereby

discerning how policy windows are opened through framing issues. Also, they clarify how agenda-setting research simultaneously allows researchers to actively engage with and lay bare power dynamics in government.

**Theories of Agenda Setting and Political Communication**

Cohen's *The Press and Foreign Policy* (1963) was the first work to present an agenda-setting hypothesis, in that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). Agenda setting is about the recognition and definition of a problem (Rogers & Dearing, 1993). It can be done by a variety of agents, but most political studies focus on the government, media, or public's agendas. Agenda-setting research has provided descriptive and evidence-based analyses of how political agendas are set by the different actors concerned with political policy; the actors may include the media, political parties, pressure groups, the public, and the public service.

As a key starting point for contemporary research, Rogers and Dearing's "The Anatomy of Agenda-setting Research" (1993) offered a bibliographic citation analysis of agenda-setting research to document the growing field of inquiry. Bibliographic citation analysis is an empirical research methodology that counts the number of articles published on a given topic over time. In this case, Rogers and Dearing counted the articles written about "agenda setting" on an annual publication basis to better understand changes in the field from 1922-1992.

They began their investigation by describing the broad aims of the field: "Ultimately, research on the agenda-setting process seeks to offer one explanation of how

social change occurs in modern society" (Rogers & Dearing, 1993, p. 69). Their study presented how the field predominantly focuses on the importance of "issues to members of the public as the main dependent variable" (Rogers & Dearing, 1993, p. 69), with most studies following issues through one of the three main agenda creation areas: the government, the media, or the public. They found that 223 research articles were published on the topic of agenda setting from 1922-1992, with the vast majority of articles coming after the watershed of 1972, when McCombs and Shaw's study of the 1968 presidential campaign was first published.

McCombs and Shaw used a content analysis of media and interviews with the public to find an almost perfect correlation between the two, suggesting that the media set the public agenda. Their findings have since been challenged by others that have demonstrated the nuances and dynamism in the relationship between the media and public on varying issues, but their preliminary results helped to foster a flurry of research.

After McCombs and Shaw's work, Rogers and Dearing described how the number of publications in the field had dropped off significantly since 1981, signalling the end of the 1970s interests in the relationship between the media and public's agendas. Over half of the articles published since 1972 focused on the particular media/public relationship (133 out of the total 223). The other main area of study was policy agendas, where researchers through the 1980s focused on mainly one individual issue, and in the 1990s researchers turned to multivariate models of tracking multiple issues simultaneously.

The number of articles published on "agenda setting" since 1972 has been on average 10 articles every five years. Skewing the average is the fact that a greater number

of articles are published after each U.S. federal election; this trend not surprisingly reflects a cyclical research lag within the field because researchers' findings are published after each election, creating a spike in academic output that contextualizes how each government formed its agenda from its platform and how the public reacted.

Rogers and Dearing's review called for a better understanding of three particular areas: (i) how the media agenda is set (Rogers & Dearing, 1993, p. 73), (ii) how real-world indicators of an issue play a role in agenda setting, and (iii) how to measure the public agenda more accurately (Rogers & Dearing, 1993, p. 80). Each of these areas is discussed in more depth in this chapter. Overall, their work found that all the substantive articles on agenda setting at the time were from American sources. Their citation analysis also presented that the last key change in agenda-setting research came in John Kingdon's breakthrough work, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984); it was the last most frequently cited work in the area, focusing solely on American examples.

Kingdon's work first linked agenda-setting practices with discussions of policy windows. He described how the government contributed to the process of agenda setting by framing the issues to advantage their policies. In effect, governments use carefully controlled language to adjust "policy windows" to accommodate its slated agenda. Kingdon defined "agenda" as "the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 3). In essence, the agenda-setting process focused attention, which today is of greater importance in a highly media-saturated political environment. Overall, by understanding Kingdon's work, researchers can better grasp how agenda setting has intensified with new methods and

technology for monitoring the impact of messaging since the 1980s.

Kingdon's work followed policy changes in American presidential political agendas for such areas as national health insurance, deregulation of aviation, trucking, and railroads and reforms of food and drug laws during the Carter Administration. In each of these policy areas, he identified the sources of agenda-setting power and the main participants in the policy formation.

In terms of final decision-making power, he found that many agenda items were left to specific administrative departments to deal with accordingly, having little executive involvement. In particular, his examples demonstrated that power lied in the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare or the head of the Food and Drug Administration (respectively for his three selected cases). There was, however, "little doubt in the minds of the participants concerning the ability of the president to dominate the agenda-setting process within the administration if he chooses to do so" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 23).

To describe the agenda-setting process, Kingdon identified three sets of variables in agenda setting that he called "streams"—namely (i) problem streams, (ii) policy streams, and (iii) political streams. These three variables interacted to create opening policy windows that participants can take advantage of to craft and create policy. The first stream of 'problem recognition' was required to create any new policy, because a problem obviously has to be identified before a policy can be crafted to respond to it. The 'policy stream' focused on political actors' conceptions that standing policy might have to be changed or adopted to new purposes, therefore a new policy window of opportunity opens. The 'political stream' depended on the climate and culture of political activity in

the government (i.e. has some event occurred that will allow a new policy window to open?).

Each stream had a community of actors, and actors could very often be involved in multiple streams. Kingdon provided this example to explain the complex overlapping of participants in a policy community:

> In the health area, for instance, people could be worried about the cost of medical care and within that problem, about the subproblems of cost to the government, cost to insurers, and cost to consumers. Or they could concentrate on the access to medical care, health habits in the population, biomedical research frontiers, or the latest epidemic. (Kingdon, 1984, p. 87)

From this example, the complexity of agenda setting becomes evident. Each actor in each stream could potentially become an impetus or a constraint to the solution of a policy problem because resources and expert knowledge are limited.

In this context, policy windows were "an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 165). Kingdon described how advocates and interest groups wait to take advantage of opening policy windows: "advocates wait in and around government with their solutions in hand, waiting for problems to float by to which they can attach their solutions, waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their advantage" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 165). His descriptions were similar to theories such as the contemporary public choice and rationalist models of political change (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Miljan, 2008; Soroka, 2002). For instance, a policy window could open based on two key rational changes: either (i) a new problem captures the attention of a government, or (ii) a change in the political stream occurs, such as a new administration entering after an election, a shift in seats in power, or a shift in the national political or ideological climate.

Howlett and Ramesh (2003; Miljan, 2008; Soroka, 2002) built upon Kingdon's work to identify four types of policy windows that can open when the three policy streams align:

1) *routinized political windows*: these windows are predictable and often cyclical that can open based on institutionalized procedures;

2) *spillover problem windows*: are those that occur when an open policy window widens to include other developing or on-going policy issues (e.g. 9/11 terrorist activity led to simultaneous changes in foreign affairs, immigration, and security policies);

3) *discretionary political windows*: are less predictable windows that develop from the behaviour of individual political actors (e.g. pressure groups or social movements);

4) *random problem windows*: are completely unpredictable windows that develop from crises (e.g. the 2008 global recession that led to economic stimulus policies as the policy window formed).

The four types of policy windows were ordered above in terms of their degree of institutionalization and predictability, from greatest to least. Most issues were predictable and routine in dynamic, longstanding governments that have developed a history of policy capacity, civil society institutions, and responsive pressure group. Overall, Kingdon argued that two types of policy windows dominate agenda-setting research, mainly those that either developed from the political or problems streams through routinized or spillover windows.

Kingdon found that a policy window closes for five common sense reasons: (i) a problem is addressed either through decision or policy enactment, (ii) participants may fail to get action, (iii) the events that created the window may pass from the scene, (iv) a change in personnel may occur that causes the window to close, and (v) sometimes there are no available options or alternatives to dealing with the policy problem (Kingdon,

1984, p. 169). Among these possibilities, Kingdon's findings emphasized the power of the executive to set the agenda in the government to create and control policy windows, but other important participants included the heads of departments, interest groups, the media, and the public. For that reason, this dissertation focuses first most on the messages represented of and directed by the executive, to understand top-down hierarchical effects in policy creation as policy moves through the streams to create and take advantage of policy windows. Other actors will be taken up when it is clear a government agenda item was influenced by the media or public, and was not directly a voted for platform item.

In the 1990s, two other models of agenda-setting research were developed that contrasted with Kingdon's *evolutionary* multiple streams model. The first model was the Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) *advocacy coalitions framework* (ACF) that argued policy actors join together based on shared information and knowledge of a problem, as well as their common interests in pursuing proposed solutions. Each coalition's policy success was influenced by the alternatives they created by joining together their group's resources and their abilities to adapt policy to external changes (the ACF is discussed in chapter nine in more detail).

The second model of agenda change was the Baumgartner and Jones *punctuated equilibrium* model (1993). This model demonstrated that policies and agendas shift quickly, rather than changing gradually over time. They argued that policies can move from a longstanding stable policy to a new policy rather quickly because of the discontinuous change in policy systems. It is not an evolutionary model like Kingdon's, because changes occur from leaps among static points. Their model did, however,

emphasize rational choice as a determining factor of policy creation within the bounded limits of a community's knowledge areas.

In Canada, Howlett (1998) and Soroka (1999) debated Kingdon's theoretical framework in the pages of the *Canadian Political Science Association* journal. They argued over the appropriate use of quantitative methods that could operationalize Kingdon's work for identifying agenda setting changes in political documents. Importantly, Kingdon's work only used quantitative research as a background for his interpretative framework of the policy process, and he did not craft a formal testable methodology to operationalize an empirical project.

In 1998, Howlett adapted the four types of policy windows to quantitative study applying a common statistical method of cross-correlation functions (CCFs) to track the frequency of policy issues occurring in government documents like *Hansard*. Howlett concluded in his study that (i) there is empirical evidence of the different types of policy windows, and (ii) a relationship can be found between institutionalized policy issues and their frequency.

Soroka rightfully argued, however, that Howlett's use of CCFs was not appropriate to lead to these conclusions, because they could only be used to document the significance of issues in a given set and not, as Howlett argued, the frequency of a trend over time (Soroka, 1999, p. 769). Soroka also argued that it was difficult to see how broad issues such as "health care" could simply fit into just one of the four categories in order to be studied empirically, especially because subtopics of health care would come from each of the four types of policy windows. Overall, Soroka argued that Howlett's

findings presented an example of the fact that not all major agenda-setting theories, or theories in general, are testable by empirical methods.

At the turn of the millennium, Kingdon's work had been criticized as opening agenda-setting research to being mainly descriptive in nature (Soroka, 2002), especially for "presenting a view of the agenda-setting process that is too contingent on unforeseen circumstances, [and] ignoring the fact that in most policy sectors […] activities tend to occur in spurts and then congeal for lengthy periods of time" (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 138). An interview excerpt that Kingdon cites reflects this methodological problem of his agenda-setting theories being difficult to explain through evidence-based methods:

> When you lobby for something, what you have to do is put together your coalition, you have to gear up, you have to get your political forces in line, and then you sit there and wait for the fortuitous event. For example, people who were trying to do something about regulation of railroads tried to ride environment for a while, but that wave didn't wash them in to shore. So they grabbed their surfboards and they tried to ride something else, but that didn't do the job. The Penn Central collapse was the big wave that brought them in. As I see it, people who are trying to advocate change are like surfers waiting for the big wave. You get there, you have to be ready to go, you have to be ready to paddle. If you're not ready to paddle when the big wave comes along, you're not going to ride it in. (Kingdon, 1984, p. 165)

Kingdon described here the dynamic social forces that must align for a policy window to open. He called "coupling" the phenomenon of "agenda issue" and "policy stream" aligning, thus allowing for a policy window to open. Some theorists questioned how broad qualitative accounts like Kingdon's could be analyzed empirically to demonstrate the "coupling" effect, but this dissertation demonstrates that tracking framing language provides one means of accomplishing it, especially when framing language and polls align in favour of a party's message over that of a competitor.

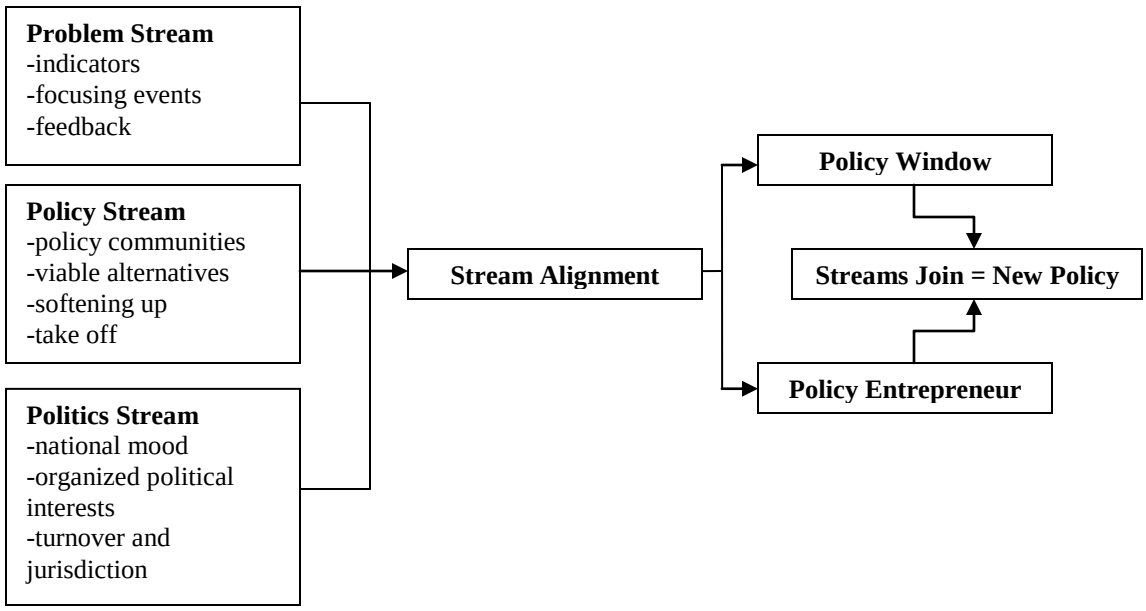
Importantly, neither Kingdon nor Howlett and Ramesh's work discussed framing

methods as a means for creating the coupling of agendas with a policy stream. In other words, they did not discuss how political communication and framing language are used to encourage the coupling of key political actors with a policy window through strategic uses of focus groups, the media, public opinion polls, or newer digital methods.

To date, Kingdon's work has been used to document U.S. foreign policy agenda setting; privatization in Britain, France and Germany; U.S. anti-drug policy; and the agenda influences of various other business and pressure groups in the U.S. and Europe (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). More recently, Michaels, Goucher, and McCarthy (2005) employed Kingdon's ideas to research policy windows in environmental studies. In Canada, Thomlinson (2005) applied Kingdon's work to explain how municipal amalgamation became an official policy in Toronto.

Of importance for this study, Tomlin, Hillmer and Hampson (2007) used Kingdon's streams to explain foreign policy changes over time. Tomlin et al. documented how real world events such as the Cold War changed funding capacity and policies for immigration, national defense, and security over time. They created the following visualization of the "Multiple Streams Model of Policy Making" to present the *evolutionary* nature of Kingdon's model (see Figure 1 below). The model demonstrated how ideas evolve and change over time in the three different streams, and when particular factors in each stream reach a critical alignment, then new policy can be created (or it at least has a higher success rate of being created).

**Figure 1: A Multiple Streams Model of Policy Making (Tomlin et al., 2007, p. 27)**




Tomlin et al. employed this model to help describe, for example, the creation of Trudeau's National Energy Program (N.E.P.), which began during his only minority government from January, 1973 to May, 1974, but the full policy did not come into effect until 1980.[1] They described the process as follows:

> First, the national mood during the run-up in oil prices in 1979-80 was strongly in favour of increased Canadian ownership in the energy sector and an enhanced role for Petro-Canada […]. Second, the N.E.P. element of the new industrial strategy was firmly under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR), and […] senior officials in EMR had been developing ideas underlying the N.E.P., and were ready to move forward with them. Third, with a new government comes a new minister, and Marc Lalonde was appointed to head EMR. Lalonde was a longstanding Trudeau ally and a strong minister, and he was eager to take on the new agenda. Finally, the government's program was supported by large Canadian oil and gas companies like Dome and Nova, and by the non-producing provinces, especially Ontario. (Tomlin et al., 2007)

[1] The N.E.P. is discussed more in chapter four as an example of minority government agenda setting.

In this example, Tomlin et al. demonstrated the usefulness of Kingdon's multiple stream model by describing the key factors in the political and policy streams that led to the creation of an official policy. The explanatory power was also useful when exploring the opposition to the N.E.P. from American and Albertan businesses that were vocal at the time, above which Trudeau supported Lalonde to push through the policy based on the factors above. The Liberals believed that Canada needed a long-term national energy stabilization solution based on their economic analyses, and they therefore implemented it believing it was the best option at the time.

Using Kingdon's work as a model provides the basis for why this dissertation tracks issue frames from platforms through to policy formation following an evolutionary model, not a static one. His multiple streams model supports the decisions to use a variety of documents and digital objects in the policy formation process to view changes in frames over time. The key methodological change that has occurred in this century is that digital methods allow researchers to track language changes as representing policy streams aligning, which is the novel experimental solution supported in this dissertation.

On the whole, Kingdon's findings and the works above would at first blush seem to support Savoie's views that power resides in the PMO and executive of the parliamentary system. Through studying Kingdon's work, it is difficult to see where else power would be held beyond the the PMO in the agenda-setting process in Canada, especially in comparison to the U.S. government; the "core executive" is after all the one stable point required for a major policy to become officially recognized and defined, beyond the dissatisfaction of the electorate who can functionally fire governments during elections. Similarly, numerous articles having been published questioning the efficacy of

ministerial cabinets (White, 2005), political parties (Carty, 2006; Cross & Young, 2006), the media (Nadeau & Giasson, 2003), academics and interest groups in setting the agenda (Cohn, 2006). Therefore, a better understanding of the messaging and framing tactics used by the PMO in minority government is required in Canadian research, especially with insights supported by empirical methods.

**Stuart N. Soroka's *Agenda-setting Dynamics in Canada***

In Canadian political science, Stuart N. Soroka's *Agenda-setting Dynamics in Canada* (2002) was a trailblazing effort for agenda-setting studies and methods for analyzing political issues. His work expanded agenda-setting research by using empirical analyses. He challenged agenda-setting research at the time, describing it as being mainly "anecdotal rather than empirical" (Soroka, 2002, p. 9). His work was based on a content analysis of *Hansard* and agenda items that are linked to, or taken up in, the media.

Soroka used a manual coding of government documents from 1985-1995 that tracked "issue salience" by literally measuring with a ruler the length of individual issues being discussed in each of his chosen objects of study (i.e. committee reports, *Hansard*, Throne Speeches, media, and polls). Soroka defined "issue salience" as "the relative importance of an issue on an actor's agenda. Moreover, it was the study of the rise and fall of issue salience over time, and of the relationships between actors' agendas [that mattered]" (Soroka, 2002, p.5). Salience referred to the amount of discussion and focus on a distinct issue in a selected object of study (e.g. the length of media that focuses on an issue, or the amount of time a government document focuses on an issue—more attention, means a higher salience).

Soroka's work was unique in that it updated the types of issues that can link with an actor's agenda to increase salience, and it described the chances of successfully opening and utilizing a policy window. To do this, he first defined what an issue was using the definitions of founding agenda-setting researchers like Cobb and Elder, and Dearing and Rogers:

> Issues have been variously defined, as "a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources" (Cobb & Elder, 1972, p. 82), for instance, or as "a social problem, often conflictual, that has received mass media coverage" (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 4). (qtd in Soroka, 2002, p. 5)

To specify how issues differed, Soroka identified three types of issues: specifically, (i) prominent, (ii) sensational, and (iii) governmental. Prominent issues are obtrusive and affect a significant number of people through real world events. Sensational issues are unobtrusive and affect a select few people; they generally arise through the media. Lastly, governmental issues are also unobtrusive and affect a select few people. Soroka's hope in using his typology was to explain how different issues arise and in effect "couple" with the agendas of political actors (though "coupling" is not a word Soroka used). Soroka also thought he might be able to "predict" agenda-setting causality (Soroka, 2002, p. 31); overall, a predictive model was not developed though. Like Howlett, his data could only be used to support observations for the given set he collected.

In his study, Soroka chose to track two prominent issues (inflation and unemployment), three sensational issues (A.I.D.S., crime, and the environment), and three governmental issues (debt and deficit, national unity, and tax). His methodology was designed to test the assertion that "differences in agenda-setting dynamics are most often a product of differences in the issues themselves" (p. 16). In other words, his test

cases were meant to demonstrate that issue salience for governmental issues and prominent issues would be far more stable than sensational issues that have salience fluctuate readily as real world events change along with a fickle public's attention influenced by the adjoining media filters.

Problematically, his selection of categories can be criticized in that the "environment" is not viewed as a prominent or a governmental issue, as well as why he chose those eight particular issues, other than the fact that some issues are required for test cases. Soroka also did not change his tracking method to reflect government power dynamics over his selected period, and he instead considered a limited set of issues that some parties might not focus on depending on ideology.

His findings broadly substantiated previous studies that demonstrated economic and financial agenda items like inflation, unemployment, debt, deficit and tax have high salience among the government, media, and public agendas when real world events occur to fix the agenda, such as increasing inflation or recessions in the markets. McCombs's *Setting the Agenda* (2004) summarized Soroka's key findings as follows:

> In line with previous evidence on the obtrusive issue of inflation, there is no evidence of any agenda-setting influence by the media on public opinion. For the environment, the relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda is reciprocal – and the impact of the public on the media appears to be stronger. Finally, for the unobtrusive and abstract issue of the Canadian national debt and budget deficits, there is evidence of significant media influence on the public agenda. (McCombs, 2004, p. 111)

Soroka's research made another important contribution in that it offered evidence that sensational issues fluctuate over time in both the media and the public agendas, and they can, for that reason, have an effect on the government agenda when they reach a high salience level. In their findings, sensational issues have the greatest effect when both the

media and public agendas are aligned.

In terms of specific research findings, he documented that newspapers in Canada did not differ widely in terms of their media agendas based on ownership, or provincial or regional coverage (Soroka, 2002, p. 44). Instead, he found "increased issue salience leads to increased inter-newspaper consistency" (p. 117). As with the media, Canadian public opinion issue salience did not vary greatly at the time based on province or region,[2] but public issue salience was found to increase based on the media agenda and high salience between the two did lead to an influence on the government agenda (Soroka, 2002, p. 53).[3]

Focusing on individual issues, he found that the environment was a standout among the media-public opinion links. Soroka found "the media play a critical part in generating public concern about environmental affairs" (Soroka, 2007, p. 203). Using a multivariate approach, Soroka concluded that agenda-setting methods are valuable because they allow for the distinct fields of mass media research, public opinion, and public policy analysis to be connected empirically.

In describing his methods, Soroka found that his chosen multivariate method of analyzing agenda setting did suffer from some difficulties. He stated:

> AIDS and crime estimations reveal few agenda-setting effects, despite the expectation that both issues would be media-driven. Whether this is a product of data or an accurate reflection of reality is unknown and will require further testing. National unity, on the other hand, displays the opposite effect to what

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[2] In chapter eight, urban and rural regions of the Canadian public definitely differed on the issue of gun control (a crime issue), and the Coalition Government issue can also be reflected in the new regional support for the Conservative party. So, his findings can be questioned in light of each new issue studied.

[3] Interestingly, Keith Davey's *Rainmaker: A Passion for Politics* (1986) described these two phenomena from a practical perspective of someone experienced in reading polling data. Davey was the Liberals' legendary election campaign leader from the early 1960s to 1980s, and he recently passed away on January 17, 2011. Without direct reference, Soroka's work supports Davey's observations about the media, and Davey's work is discussed more in chapter four on modern minority government framing strategies.

> was predicted: it appears to have led policy. In fact, each of the governmental issue estimations is testament to the difficulties involved in developing policy measures to use in agenda-setting analyses. (Soroka, 2002, pp. 97-98)

Soroka's methods were able in some instances to help verify other research in agenda setting, and he clarified from reviewing his results for the specific issues of AIDS, crime and national unity that it was difficult to use empirical means to create a standard understanding for all issues. In this way, issue by issue agenda-setting analyses are required and no predictive model has yet to be created.

Of note, Soroka did not share his full methodological categorization schema in detail (Soroka, 2002, p. 138), so it is difficult to assess his efforts in terms of the problems suggested previously, especially with a focus on a single issue such as "gun control." For example, there is no clarification of how multiple policy issues are tracked, since a "crime" issue like "rape" can be considered a health care, public safety, or social policy issue—not necessarily just a crime issue. In other words, there is a strong chance that his measurements of *Hansard* are skewed because of decisions to include or exclude (i) synonyms of his chosen terms or (ii) other indexed discussions in *Hansard* that do not at first blush appear to discuss crime issues; these efforts are difficult to assess today without access to his data.

Soroka was aware of these limitations and suggested that "[y]early analyses might find more success in tracking general policy trends using a single series" (Soroka, 2002, p. 156). If he is correct, then his results should be reproducible using new methods in similar objects of study today, and his methods will be important for understanding how agenda-setting dynamics operate in a minority government setting. Overall, his work demonstrated a mechanism for tracking highly salient issues over time as being a key

means for identifying potential agenda-setting shifts in political documents. Obviously highly salient issues are of keen interest for minority governments where the potential downfall of the government can be based on any new challenges to the government agenda.

It is important to highlight that Soroka's work did not include discussions of framing language. The closest Soroka's work came to discuss the framing of language was in a review of Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922). Lipmann is widely viewed as the founding student of the field of political communication. His journalism identified mass media's role in contextualizing the relationship between "The world outside and the pictures in our heads" (qtd. in Soroka, 2002, p. 7). Image control and framing language are missed in Soroka's work particularly in his descriptions of how refinements of language control developed from 1980s media advertising firms and public relations magnates.

Soroka's study also missed the nuance of describing the process of how government and media use language to attract voters and promote favourable policy windows. New frames analysis methods can establish why salience changes at particular moments by tracking the language that is used at critical junctures, and new methods can also give us a better understanding of how minority governments control frames to move an agenda forward.

To summarize, the main issue with Soroka's agenda-setting work, and others since, is that agenda-setting language changes over time and different frames appear that might not be captured in samples of data by using fixed content analysis categories.

At the turn of the millennium, Soroka's work provided an exceptional review of

agenda-setting literature and methods for analyzing and comparing the agendas of the government, media, and Canadian public. The limitations of his work described above are the starting point for this current study. While his methods are still one option for empirical study, new digital methods will be applied in this project to track framing language over time, because they allow researchers to focus on individual party agendas, which is a comparison that his work missed. He instead focused on the ruling government's agenda, and did not differentiate agendas by party. As well, his work focused on majority governments and did not differentiate agenda-setting tactics under different governments.

**Frames Analysis in Political Communication**

The studies of framing language and agenda-setting research have become aligned since Erving Goffman's original formulation of frames analysis in 1974 (Entman, 2004; 2006). Frames analysis is a central construct of agenda-setting theory, particularly of studies using descriptive methods, because Goffman's work identified how rhetorical and conceptual markers change both the objects to which individuals attend and their thoughts towards those same objects. Goffman defined 'frames' as cognitive structures that either consciously or unconsciously lead individuals to attend to an object of interest. The 'frame' simultaneously defines and situates the object for the individual.

Discourse and narrative analysis texts describe frames analysis as follows:

> The term 'frame analysis' is Erving Goffman's, for whom the frame analysis of talk is a specific instance of our capacity to distinguish between 'the content of a current perception and the reality status we give to what is thus enclosed or bracketed within perception' […]. The 'brackets' he calls frames. (Herman, Jahn, and Ryan 185)

In the example given here, frames analysis is understood as a method for deconstructing and identifying discursive or narrative boundaries. Common instances of frames analysis include how the written content of conversations are in fact narratives framed by quotation marks, or similarly how a table of contents frames an entire story (186); both examples here are figurative semiotic devices used to establish different levels of reality in a story.

Frames analysis operates on similar principles in media studies and political communication, although these fields focus on the broader level of how actors position their communicative actions and messages within social and ideological contexts (Hart et al., 2005; Lakoff, 2004; 2007; Lewis, 2001). The power of discourse to influence the perception of reality can be traced even further back than frames analysis to Aristotle's ancient analysis of rhetoric in third century BC (Aristotle, 2004), or in modern times Foucault's ground-breaking works on discourse (Foucault, 1975; 1977).

Aristotle's work on rhetoric highlighted the benefits of the objective disciplined study of the art of persuasion in three books. He argued:

> Rhetoric is useful (1) because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be balanced accordingly. Moreover, (2) before some audiences not even the possession of the exactest knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot instruct. Here, then we must use, as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody […]. Further, (3) we must be able to employ persuasion, just as strict reasoning can be employed, on opposite sides of a question, not in order that we may in practice employ it in both ways […], but in order that we may see clearly what the facts are […]. (Aristotle, Book I, p. 5).

Aristotle offered a fourth argument for the usefulness of rhetoric, which was that every human deserves the right to defend their interests vigorously, but overall, his study of

language begins with a concern for the audience listening to a message and the objective means of how that message can be conveyed in a convincing and truthful way.

Michel Foucault's means for justifying the truth of a message was to take text and speech acts as recorded in documents as the objective truth; the simple foundational fact being that the document or artifact could be reproduced to support that a person had created it. He called the objective truth of the text "discourse", and his discourse analysis method was developed and utilized in such works as *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976). His methods have become common tools for establishing how institutions create and maintain power through the use of language and rhetoric.

Like frames, discourse provides a double articulation of power in that it can be both a historical record and a criticism of previous discursive statements. Foucault's insights helped shed light on how the state is configured to discipline and control human behaviours through the use of language. Overall, his work supports the study of language as being representative of actions, which for agenda-setting and policy research is of keen interest because some trace of words must come first before any policy is officially created or "sold" to the public.

Ten years ago, Gail Fairhurst and Robert Starr linked the concepts of "framing" and "managing the language of leadership" in *The Art of Framing* (1996). They insisted that framing is "a quality of communication that causes others to accept one meaning over another" and can spell the difference between effective and ineffective leadership (Fairhurst and Starr, 1996: xi). Their argument was clear: the use of language and an understanding of context could be translated into effective leadership communication.

For example, an actor such as Bill Gates sometimes makes speeches on behalf of his company Microsoft (a private frame), his philanthropic Gates Foundations (a non-profit frame), for government panels on ICT developments (a governmental frame), or even as a public citizen concerned for the world in general (a public frame). One can question using frames analysis of media content whether or not a message delivered by Gates through his non-profit or charitable capacities is not just meant to foster his private aspirations. In fact, theorists have argued such things in terms of many dominant media players—for example, George Lakoff (2004) famously argued using his cognitive linguistic approach to American politics that national politics was dominated by two competing frames: the "nurturant parent frame" and the "strict father frame".

Lakoff aligned the nurturing parent frame with the Democratic Party's views of American society and the strict father frame to the Republicans. Using these frames, he demonstrated that George W. Bush's government used repetitive messages and terms like "Weapons of Mass Destruction" and "War on Terror" to foster public opinion in support for their agenda to create a war in Iraq through their media communications with the public. Those rhetorical phrases were emblematic of the "strict father frame" used to persuade the public to support the Republican's agenda.

Since 2000, theorists have started to link agenda-setting and frames analyses through empirical work, but no studies of Canadian government and digital methods have yet been conducted. McCombs and Ghanem's "The convergence of agenda setting and framing" (2001) was among the earliest to describe the uses of focus groups and polls to forecast the results of political groups using frames to prime the public to support partisan policies and ends. Other research has demonstrated that agenda-setting frames can be

tested and set by political actors through specific keywords and language that represent key issues (e.g. Ghanem, McCombs & Chernov, 2009; Kim & McCombs, 2007; McCombs and Ghanem, 2001; Weaver, 2007).

McCombs's *Setting the Agenda* (2004) described how framing language and its analysis in association with agenda setting developed in the 1980s, starting with Baumgartner and Jones's studies on media. They found that shifts in public opinion and policy were often preceded by increased salience of new frames or arguments presented in the media on such topics as nuclear power, tobacco, pesticides and auto safety. McCombs's stated that "Certain characteristics of an object may resonate with the public in such a way that they become especially compelling arguments for the salience of the issue, person or topic under consideration" (McCombs, 2004, p. 92).

Similarly, Weaver (2007) described how research around the turn of millennium had identified two levels of agenda-setting research, one of which overlapped with what some theorists have called "the agenda frame". The first level, such as in Soroka, McComb and Gahnem's respective works, focused on issue salience—or the question of "what" objective issues are covered by the government, media, or public—whereas newer research has focused on a second ideational level: "how such issues are reported and discussed" (Weaver, 2007, p. 142). The second level "attributes" of agenda-setting research is described by Weaver as similar to media "frames" in some studies, but not necessarily a direct equivalent, because much qualitative research has used "frames" to mean "problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations, as well as key phrases, and words" (Weaver, 2007, p. 143).

Debate still exists among researchers as to how agenda-setting and framing

language research could be combined as they have developed from separate traditions, the former mainly quantitative and the latter mostly qualitative. Weaver argued that the challenge to researchers was to effectively combine the two studies in the future, but he offered no means for settling the debates; his work instead was an outline of the relationships among agenda-setting, framing, and priming research. Priming research is the study of how agenda-setting language can be used to affect public opinion. It developed in the 1990s (14 articles in *Communication Abstracts*) and more so in the 2000s (25 articles in *Communication Abstracts*).

Weaver's bibliographic analysis found that where agenda-setting research has recently stagnated (giving credence to Rogers and Dearing's work described above), priming and framing research has increased dramatically. He argued, "Future studies should make renewed efforts to define frames and framing more clearly, and to clarify the similarities and differences—and explore the relationships—between framing and agenda setting, and between framing and priming" (p. 146). This dissertation focuses on the former relationship. It tracks "key words" and "issue units" as synonymous with linguistic frames that represent partisan agenda items.

Researchers of digital media have noted that media frames and their "issue units" are selected by political parties to differentiate their policies from their competitors in order to attract the popular support of voters (Rogers, 2004; Marres & Rogers, 2005; Marres, 2006). The art, practice, and strategies of message control came to a critical head as required political tools under Karl Rove's tactics of breaking up voter demographics in the U.S. by using framing language to win during the two Bush election campaigns in 2000 and 2004 (Hart, Jarvis, Jennings, & Smith-Howell**,** 2005; Lakoff, 2004; Lewis,

2001). Such framing practices have been identified in the U.S. in studies of the Bush-led Republican party's use of keywords like "Strong Defense, Free Markets, Lower Taxes, Smaller Government, Family Values" (Lakoff, 2004). Can the same practice be found using computer-assisted methods in Canadian federal political communications?

Recently, daily newspapers have made a common practice of using computer-assisted textual analysis to identify issues and policy frames; the media has described such methods as simply as "counting words" in a document. These methods have become extremely popular in the media in recent years for tracking and comparing Throne Speeches, Presidential Speeches, and other political communication. For example, the qualitative analysis of President Bush's State of the Union address, on January 28, 2008, that was covered thematically in *The Globe and Mail* can be contrasted with the quantitative counting methods used in *The National Post* on the same day. Both methods provide insight into Bush's constructed message, but *The National Post*'s coverage gives a detailed numerical value for keywords like "Peace", "War", "Weapons", "Iraq", and "Terror", comparing all of his addresses going back to 2001. The values provided for these words demonstrated for instance that the term "Iraq" was used very few times until January 28, 2003, when it climbs from 2 uses to 21, and continues to remain frequently used for each year thereafter in the State of the Union.

In Canadian media, a February 2008 *Ottawa Citizen* article "Parties let loose the buzzwords" counts key issue words in Question Period records. McGregor found that "[w]hile Conservative MPs and ministers use the words 'crime', 'terror' and 'terrorism' in question period more than any of other three parties, they get their grass mowed by the NDP when it comes to dropping 'accountability', 'ethics/ethical' and even

‘taxes/tax/taxation.’” The one-line description of his methodology is “Keyword counts were drawn from electronic versions of *Hansard*, the official record of House of Commons debates,” and his methodology is a simple enough description that can also be used to describe the frequency count method used in this project at its most basic form.

More complex techniques can be found in the work of Hart et al.’s *Political Keywords* (2005), which described several methods for tracking keywords and offered case studies of analyzing media messages in political discourse, textbooks, campaigns and presidential speeches. They argued from their analysis of presidential language that rhetoric “offers therapeutic help to cope with the rigors of governance, intellectual help to make the world seem cohesive, [and] strategic help to make partisanship an advantage” (Hart et al., 2005, p. 178). Their findings are critical of the U.S. electorate and media that followed a leader’s language, rather than the actual actions that are recorded in historical and experiential precedents that have guided governance in the past. As such, their tools can help researchers to be critical of language that obfuscates the actions that occur within an institution.

This current study does not use a complete and thorough content analysis as much of *Keywords* did; instead, many of the techniques herein are based on basic exploratory textual analysis, which could be used to continue a full content analysis of the Web objects studied in this dissertation. This methodological decision was made to demonstrate the power of exploratory investigative research that harnesses automated searches, to contrast traditional content analysis, like Hart et al. or Soroka’s work. New digital tools allow scholars to identify how rhetoric changes over time and to track feedback in real time (these processes are documented in the following chapters).

In 2007, Chong and Druckman demonstrated how repeating frames frequently did ensure the success of the frame for priming an audience. Other factors such as real world events, factual evidence, opinion polls, and media support for an issue did help to align an issue with a popularly repeated frame to affect the influence of an individual. Their findings support the rational choice model of agenda setting discussed above. In other words, frames evolve in the specificity of the message, quantity, and who is involved in delivering it, much like Kingdon's descriptions of policy windows.

In 2008, Campbell and Jamieson described the importance of focusing on words and rhetorical strategies through the discourse of leaders in an era when teams of writers are used to craft the partisan communication documents. They argued that leaders still approve the final documents and this act constructs their symbolic image; researchers can, therefore, focus on language and the text to understand the representational nature of partisan leaders' discourse in political documents. Although other framing mechanisms exist such as symbolic and graphical objects that could be tracked and analyzed, the scope in this dissertation is limited mainly to rhetorical frames.

In 2009, Howlett crafted a framework of four basic categories for analyzing government policy documents and communications. The framework was meant to clarify the separation of communication research areas that can focus on (i) the links among government communication and the nodal uses of policy instruments (i.e. tracking the *who* and *where* of place-to-place communication), (ii) the role of front-end government policy agenda setting in producing communications compared with back-end policy implementation documents (i.e. *what* communication processes connected *by which* technologies), and (iii) the aims of overcoming networked information asymmetries to

explain communication tools (i.e. *how* much of a particular kind of communication is needed). His framework used a modernist structural model that breaks the types of policy communication into four discrete categories (see Table 1 below).

| **Table 1: Four Basic Types of Government Communication Tools** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Policy Purpose** | |
| **Stage of Policy Cycle/Production Process Primarily Targeted** | *Substantive* | *Procedural* |
| *Front-end*<br>(Agenda-setting and Policy Formulation/Goods and Service Production) | Notification Instruments/Moral Suasion<br><br>(e.g.)<br>- Consumer product labeling, prospectus disclosure laws<br>- Government e-health and e-government portals<br>- Appeals to producers with or without the threat of regulation | General Information Disclosure or Prevention<br><br>(e.g.) Freedom of information & Privacy Laws, Performance, Measures, Censorship |
| *Back-end*<br>(Policy Implementation and Policy Evaluation/Goods and Service Distribution and Consumption) | Exhortation and Information Campaigns<br><br>(e.g.) Moral Suasion and Government Advertizing | Data Collection and Release<br><br>(e.g.) Censuses, Compulsory Reporting, Press Releases, Media Relations, and Government Websites |
| **Source:** (Howlett, 2009, p. 27) | | |

Howlett argued that the taxonomy was the required first step to understand empirical patterns in government communication, either spatially (cross nationally) or temporally (historically). He found that the dominant forms of government communication were front-end substantive notifications and procedural back-end data collections or releases.

In this dissertation, partisan websites, platforms, government Throne Speeches, prime minister speeches, and *Hansard* are studied. Howlett did not discuss these types of government communications in his work, and perhaps with the exception of platforms, each of these now hypermodern communication vehicles complicates Howlett's taxonomy because they can present frames from each of his categories, often simultaneously. Upon first assessment, Throne Speeches and platforms might be the only

clear front-end substantive agenda-setting documents. Throne speeches complicate the category though because continuing governments can use Throne Speeches to discuss items from any of the other categories to demonstrate a record of policy achievement.

Although it is not without deficiencies, his modern framework is still useful for explaining the political communications being tracked in this dissertation as a starting point. The dominant frames and tendencies of documents can be identified through different means though. For instance, Rogers and Marres' methods are helpful because they argued that identifying dominant themes and trends in communication can be empirically established by following repetitive words and phrases that can be tracked through coordinated messages across taxonomical documents to study how the "issues units" or linguistic themes bring actors together over time. Questions can then be raised about who produced the issue frame, who supported it, and whether or not it was salient because it is in an agenda-setting communication or some representative form of political document. In other words, issue salience is used to identify the top priority agenda items first, before deciding which documents affect the agenda in the policy cycle.

Howlett's framework does help to establish to some degree that party websites, platforms, and Throne Speeches are front-end agenda-setting information resources from their traditional roles in government to date, whereas prime minister speeches and *Hansard* can definitely include communication of policies at any point in the policy cycle. For that reason, each tool will be discussed in chronological order throughout this dissertation, from the election campaign through to the final prime minister speech and *Hansard* record.

## Agenda-setting, Framing, and Internet Politics Research

Internet politics research is, like the medium itself, in its relative infancy as a subspecialty of political communication, agenda-setting and framing studies. The field is subject to the dynamic changes of Internet technologies as they continue to develop and proliferate along with the mobile and social uses of the Web. In early communication research, Marshall McLuhan identified in the late 1960s that media technology and information had become new natural resources increasing the wealth of the global community, stating, "In the Age of Information, the moving of information is by many times the largest business in the world" (1969). He prophesized that an entire technological monitoring system for human actions would be created that would involve a completely customizable individualized digital environment that acted as prosthetic extensions for (and of) our bodies, minds, and senses.

Communication and Media theorists since McLuhan have filled in his prophesies with detailed theories describing how the advances in the human-technology digital media ecology have functionally created an entirely new media production cycle. The following list of key communication media terms highlights this evolution:

1. **Remediation:** Bolter and Grusin (2000) were among the earliest to describe how "new" digital media reused and recombined all previous forms of audio and visual media into one virtual environment.

2. **Premediation:** Grusin (2004) also described how governments were using coordinated media campaigns to "frame" and "prime" the public's attitudes about key events (e.g. the U.S. government's frames concerning the links between the "War on Terror" and the nonexistent "Weapons of Mass Destruction" to build support for the Iraq War before it occurred). He called this media strategy "premediation" or media that was developed and presented to the public before an actual event occurred to set up audience expectations.

3. **Demediation:** Van den Boomen (2005) described this media strategy on her research blog while critiquing Bolter and Grusin's understanding of remediation.

Demediation is the idea that new media innovations are designed to hide their material components and processes that construct and structure ideational realities. The strategy basically underlines that designers make conscious decisions in their selection of code, technologies, and media strategies to efface and obfuscate the technologies that structure digital interfaces (e.g. whether to use audio, visual, or multimodal elements to accentuate or de-accentuate elements of networked communication).

4. **Immediation:** Van den Boomen also described how the tactics above are all used to make communication using digital environments feel hyper-immediate, as if events are happening simultaneously and without delay. Immediation in the following analysis also means the automated recording, analysis, and representation of history through the use of computers.

At this point, the media production cycle has now been fully theorized from start to finish as including the partisan delivery of messages to frame and control public opinion before, during, and after significant political events occur, as well as automatically updating developments about such mediated events.

Internationally, digital humanists (e.g. Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth, 2004) and Internet politics researchers like Richard Rogers (2004) and Noortje Marres (2006), Christine Hine (2008), Rachel Gibson (2004), and Phillip Howard (2002) have demonstrated how new digital methods are offering insights into online political communication and organization (some of their methods are discussed above).[4] Since 2000, researchers have demonstrated that political parties and activists are using the Internet and its mobile social media extensions to varying degrees of success for all forms of political communication such as campaigning, fundraising, mass and targeted advertising, message control, propaganda, and recruiting. Scholarship of tracking online

[4] For more on the gaps in early Internet scholarship, see Lancashire's *Humanities Computing Yearbook* (1991), which lists the following Humanities disciplines using computing in their research for textual analysis: Archaeology, Art History, Biblical Studies, Computational Linguistics, Creative Writing, Dance, Drama, English Language Instruction, Folklore Studies, Historical Studies, Law, Lexicography, Linguistics, Musicology, Natural Language and Literatures, and Philosophy (p. v). Political communication was not listed at the time.

agenda-setting and framing techniques can be found only tangentially in those works, or others like Kristen Foot and Steven Schneider's *Web Campaigning* (2006), and Andrew Chadwick and Philip Howard's *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics* (2006). Regardless, none of those works have focused on Canadian federal politics.

In Canada, researchers have focused mostly on tracking elite or partisan dominance on individual *information streams* such as blogs (Elmer, Langlois, Devereaux, Ryan, McKelvey, Redden & Curlew, 2009; Giasson, Raynauld & Darisse, 2009; Raynauld, Giasson & Darisse, 2009; Small, 2007), Facebook and YouTube (Smith & Chen, 2009), Twitter (Small, 2010), Wikipedia (Langlois, 2006), and online news media (Elmer, Skinner, & Devereaux, 2006). These studies have identified that particular forms of digital code can be tracked automatically using proprietary or open source software applications. The information that can be captured and later analyzed includes among other metadata the content creator's name, the date of publication, hyperlinked news media stories, and geographical locations of the creator (just to name a few common coding software metadata "tags").

Tracking metadata tags (or "data about data" as metadata is defined), researchers have demonstrated that information leaders primarily develop in social networks following a linear logarithmic functionality, where other users link to the most interesting or authoritative accounts online, thereby pushing the top content creators higher in search engines or the various attention streams of digital social networks (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Benkler, 2006). Benkler, for instance, argued that digital networks fostered democratic civil society because of this linking capacity:

> [Blogs and online discussion spaces] give us a set of functional characteristics that we might seek in a public sphere: a place where people can come to express

> and listen to proposals for agenda items—things that ought to concern us as members of a polity and that have the potential to become objects of collective actions; a place where we can make and gather statements of fact about the state of our world and about alternative courses of action; where we can listen to opinions about the relative quality and merits of those facts and alternative courses of actions; and a place where we can bring our own concerns to the fore and have them evaluated by others. (Benkler, 2006, p. 181)

Benkler's research emphasized the liberal characteristics of a democratic public sphere as supporting political transparency in society, which allows people to hold power to account based on the tradition of liberal individualism. He identified how the Internet may restrict private and public freedoms in authoritarian societies like China and North Korea that filter out Western media online, but he also addressed the many benefits ICTs offer democratic nations.

He believed democratic tendencies could be fostered in open networks online that offered "enhanced autonomy" to individuals. Specifically, Benkler found that "enhanced autonomy" emerged online in the ways people can

1) do more for and by themselves
2) work in "loose commonality" with others [and]
3) do more in formal organizations that operate outside the market sphere. (Benkler, 2006, p. 8)

His work documented several case studies of the blogosphere to identify how "enhanced autonomy" emerged from network structures to offer the three practical benefits outlined above.

Using network theory to model the blogosphere, he identified the four main models that exist for understanding network communication's impact on democratic public spheres: (i) the classic "normal distribution" of networked individuals (Benkler,

2006, p. 252); (ii) the power law distribution that favours public opinion leaders in the blogosphere; (iii) the skewed long-tail of smaller networks that have higher democratic style links within clusters of users, and (iv) the "small world effects" that Stanley Milgram identified in his now famous "six degrees of separation" mailing campaign, which allowed users in an online environment to leverage their social networks to influence elite players. Figure 2 illustrates the three models of the links among individual blogs on the Internet found in Benkler's case studies.

**Figure 2: Three Network Models (Benkler, 2006, p. 252)**

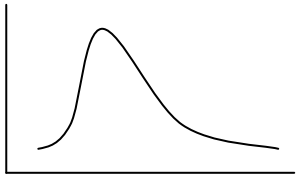
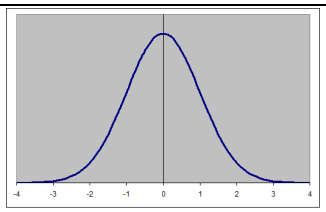
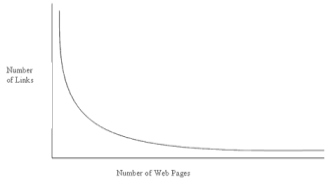
| Skewed Long Tail | Normal Distribution | Power Law Model |
|---|---|---|
|  |   |   |
| **Public Participation** | | **Private Dominance** |

Figure 2 above illustrates the "Power Law Model" that Benkler described as offering the least amount of access to a network because dominant actors remain central to the network forever after other people link to their work online. Often dominant hubs like Google, MSN, or Yahoo retain their top positions consistently in such network models because of their popularity that is built from their constant upgrading of the useful aggregation systems, which thereby reinforce their key positions in the network. However, both the normal distribution and skewed long tail models offer increasing numbers of people access to networked democratic forms of behaviour.

In a long enough cycle, most networks tend towards a normal distribution as more links and individuals join a network, but many blogs that focus on particular issues

resemble the "skewed long tail," where some parts of the network discuss an issue more frequently than others, and over time more actors join in until the discussion trails off. These two alternative models—the normal distribution and skewed long tail— challenge theories that modern corporate communication dominate online political discussion. Benkler believed these network patterns exist because of the remarkable series of changes in networked technologies, economic organizations, and social practices of production online:

> [Recent network structure changes have] created new opportunities for how we make and exchange information, knowledge, and culture. *These changes have increased the role of nonmarket and nonproprietary production, both by individuals alone and by cooperative efforts in a wide range of loosely or tightly woven collaboration.* These newly emerging practices have seen remarkable success in areas as diverse as software development and investigative reporting, avant-garde video and multiplayer online games. Together, they hint at the emergence of a new information environment, one in which individuals are free to take a more active role than was possible in the industrial information economy of the twentieth century. (Benkler, 2006, p. 2, emphasis added)

Others have since demonstrated Benkler's findings that support his work, noting that secondary groups of networked individuals can be found to form online based on like-minded interests, similar areas of expertise, or credentials (Shen & Monge, 2011). These studies are important because they highlight the patterns by which issues can move through the attention streams of networked social organizations and become dominant agenda items in political communication.

To date, few Canadian researchers have specifically focused on online partisan word frequencies and their relationships to agendas and issues. Canadian text analysis researchers Rockwell and Sinclair (2008) posted a novel experiment of word counts on the Textual Analysis Portal (TAPoR) research hub that demonstrated the potential of analyzing the issue of "race" using digital methods on a sample of Obama's speeches.

Beyond such experiments, the Canadian Communication Association scholars were among the earliest to analyze Canadian federal partisan uses of the Internet for political communication (Elmer et al., 2006; Zamaria & Fletcher, 2007). Elmer et al. created the first full conference panel on the 2006 election featuring papers on the party campaign Websites (Ryan, 2006), blogs (Devereaux, 2006), and Wikipedia (Langlois, 2006).

The first full panels of online politics at the Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) started in 2009 (Andrew, 2009; Chu, 2009; Fritz, 2006; Milner, 2009; Smith & Chen, 2009). Before that time only one or two papers a year were accepted to the CPSA in the area of Internet politics. CPSA Internet politics papers to date have focused on online media bias concerning single issues (e.g. child care policy in Fritz, 2009), MPs uses of the Web for self-representation (Jansen & Thomas, 2003), and youth participation online (Milner, 2009). In other words, the study of Internet politics is certainly still developing in Canada and many exciting avenues are available for exploration from a multitude of perspectives, including agenda setting and framing.

In this research context, Kingdon's agenda-setting concepts of the problem, policy, and political streams can be viewed as ahead of the times when compared to the number of media and information streams that politicos must now monitor and harness for up to date information that can affect agendas and message framing (e.g. the information streams of Digg, Facebook, Tumbler, Twitter, or YouTube, to name a few). However, to date no application or software has harnessed the interoperable nature of social media to track or label online "issue units" systematically, thereby creating an agenda-setting issue tracking tool, which could be similar to Microsoft's Project Manager for the business world. This chapter and dissertation sketches a systematic approach in

terms of methods for collecting and analyzing such information, extending Kingdon's "stream" concept to the digital age, but comes short of developing an actual automated application.

**Conclusion: Linking Agenda-setting and Framing Research**

This research project uses frames analysis for the express purpose of combining agenda-setting salience of issues with the changing frames of language. The review above provided a list of possible agenda-setting research strategies:

1. **Attending to Issues (issue salience):** What are the most discussed agenda topics or issues? (e.g. Soroka, 2002)

2. **Priming Audiences through Framing (salience of repetitive couplets and phrases):** What are the most discussed rhetorical frames and by whom? (e.g. Marres, 2006; Marres & Rogers, 2005; Rogers, 2004)

3. **Measuring changing Attitudes (focus groups / polls):** Did the frames have an effect? (e.g. Ghanem, McCombs & Chernov, 2009)

This dissertation analyzes mainly the second level of agenda-setting tactics to connect agenda-setting and framing research. It uses other conducted polls and empirical research to document the outcomes of those frames by comparing the shifts in language over time that have afforded some new policy windows to become open. In other words, this research puts a frame in the window, the policy window to be precise, as one more required tool among the agenda-setting techniques described in the review above.

Identifying the frames present in digital documents that coincide with policy developments allows researchers to track the success of second level agenda-setting attributes (or "frames") over time. Tracking the changing language representative of partisan viewpoints reflects the issue agenda of Kingdon's policy stream where groups and issues couple together through language. The review also established that an agenda-

setting framework is required to understand and record changes in the PMO's centralization because of the fact that priorities are predominantly set within parliamentary democracies by prime ministers and their cabinets through the coupling of what Kingdon called the problem, policy, and political streams.

To demonstrate coupling, this dissertation has taken the novel approach of using Soroka's empirical measure of salience to track the government, media, and public agendas by linking it with Rogers' digital methods, which updated agenda-setting research by merging the two fields empirically. Rogers' methods permit researchers to track repetitive issue couplets and phrases that are representative of issue units, or partisan frames, that move through the three policy streams (or "information streams", using Rogers' terminology). Researchers can track what is said about an issue represented by a particular linguistic frame and compare it to the partisan platform and agenda documents that are the basis for drafted policies that are then are passed into law. If a policy is passed that is represented by a dominant issue unit at any particular time, then the frame can be noted as successfully opening a policy window through detailed empirical analysis, especially where polls are available to provide further evidence of the acceptance of one frame over another.

To summarize, the Canadian minority government political context has yet to be analyzed using the study of frames and agenda-setting techniques conjoined as depicted above, especially using digital methods. Much descriptive research has been completed recently on the rhetorical and symbolic creation of the U.S. presidency through language and speeches (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008; Cohen, 2008; Clifton, 2008; Kenski, Hardy & Jamieson, 2010; Kumar, 2007), but few Canadian works have focused on prime

ministerial language during minority government (Savoie, 2008; Russell, 2008; Wells, 2007), with more research instead having been conducted in the ‘90s focusing on U.S. issues solely (Crimmins & Nesbitt-Larking, 1996; Levine, 1993; Mendelsohn, 1996; Suedfeld, Bluck, Ballad, & Baker-Brown, 1992). Many of the works discussed in this chapter will be taken up later when examining the Throne Speeches and prime ministerial speeches specifically.

To start this study, an understanding is first required of how past minority Canadian governments have maintained power and “framed” the issues that would keep them in power as long as possible. For this purpose, the next chapter summarizes how the PMO has grown since the late 1960s under Trudeau until Harper’s minority government period. Then, the following two chapters supply historical analyses of how previous leaders have worked to maintain their agendas in the early modern (chapter three) and modern Canadian minority governments (chapter four). These histories are then used for comparison with contemporary minority government tactics to demonstrate the heightened use of self-conscious and strategic agenda-setting techniques in the present digital network era.

## Chapter Two
## The PMO and the Management of Agenda Setting in Minority Government

This chapter first reviews the organizational structures of the PMO and Cabinet to understand their processes and the flow of power through the executive. It documents how the executive operates and how decisions are made to set the agenda and guide government policy implementation. The "levers of power", as Savoie (2010) described the political communication apparatus of the PMO, can be contextualized from an institutional and organizational development perspective to illustrate its hierarchical flows of power. The leadership and executive style of each prime minister can only be assessed by identifying how the PMO and Cabinet have been steered and used to set the government agenda.

After the institutional review, an overview of past minority governments is required to understand the Canadian playbook of agenda setting that prime ministers and their courtiers have used. Agenda setting can be identified historically by examining how political concepts are rhetoricized by prime ministers to set up frames and open policy windows. A leader or party that changes framing messages often, or is silent on an issue, is often labeled by the opposition as one that either cannot make up its mind, or that possesses no leadership or expertize. The Prime Minister might instead be trying to anticipate or catch up to what the opposition is saying in an attempt to keep control of the agenda. During a minority government situation, the government can easily lose the confidence of the House and the public when they no longer can control their agenda, forcing an election.

This chapter reviews contemporary analyses of minority government to identify trends in prime ministerial agenda-setting strategies (Dobell, 2000; Russell, 2008). In the

following chapters, this format of analysis will be used to create a standard playbook of media frames used to craft strategic successes in minority governments based on three key factors: (i) a prime minister's decision making and leadership skills, (ii) the make-up and support of their Cabinet, and (iii) the balance of power in the House. These three factors determine the limits for the extent of power a centralized PMO has over parliamentary democracy in a minority government.

**The Centralization of the PMO**

In 1968, the PMO in the Langevin Block on Parliament Hill had a 40 member staff under Pearson (Savoie, 2000). In August 2010, the PMO was targeting ways to pay down its $54 billion deficit, but still announced hiring 20 more staff members to help with regional and ethnic media at an increase of $1 million annually to its 2009 office budget of $8.15 million, reaching a total of 107 staff members with an overall budget of $9.89 million (CTV, 2010). From 2000 until 2010, the PMO staff size had remained relatively stable at around 85 staff members, as Chrétien and Martin had used budget cutting measures to reduce the PMO from the Mulroney high of a 120 person staff (Jackson & Jackson, 2009).

The cost of running the PMO fluctuated, however, between $6.7-million in 2000-2001 and a high of $13.8-million in 2005-2006, the transitional year that both Martin and Harper shared office (*The Globe and Mail*, 2010). Another report in 2010 found that "When adjusted for inflation, however, it appears that annual PMO budgets have remained relatively constant in the range of $7-million to $10-million over this 34-year period" (Davis, 2010), with Mulroney's PMO costing the most at $12-million per year at

adjusted rates.

By way of comparison, the PCO employed 372 staff members in 2000, while it was 209 in 1969 (Savoie, 2000). In 2007, the PCO's budget was $151 million, out of which the PMO's budget is allocated. The PCO prior to 1968 was the main office at the disposal of the prime minister for policy development and implementation., Savoie discussed the PMO's growth as compared to the PCO, and noted that "These figures are all the more remarkable since the size of the federal government today, Treasury Board Secretariat officials often proudly assert, is about what it was in the late 1960s" (Savioe, 2000). In other words, Savoie argued that the PMO's growth from the 1960s was beyond what was reasonably needed, especially when the growing PCO was available to the government.

In his autobiography *My Years As Prime Minister* (2007), Jean Chrétien noted how the PMO had notably grown from King's time when one or two private secretaries were used, to 120 employees in the 1990s under Mulroney, which his Chief of Staff Jean Pelletier cut to 80 employees as a cost saving measure. Pelletier was the former mayor of Québec City and a defeated Liberal candidate when Chrétien appointed him as his first Chief of Staff; Eddie Goldberg, a lifelong friend, was his senior policy advisor. He described how Pelletier ran the PMO as a "tight-lipped" ship that did not suffer from internal team conflicts like some PMO's have faced (Chrétien, 2007, p. 18). Chrétien stated that the Chief of Staff's job was to focus most key communications through the Prime Minister, who alone would be the face of the government:

> [Pelletier] neither wanted nor needed to be in the news, and he told all the staff to stay out of the spotlight too unless a matter had to do directly with their jobs. As a result, we didn't suffer from the public feuding, backbiting gossip, and

anonymous leaks that had plagued other PMOs. (Chrétien, 2007, p. 18)

Chrétien's description overall presented the PMO as a family and a motivated team who understood their roles well and worked towards a committed vision, not a group of courtiers as in Savoie's work.

Others have noted that the real growth in the PMO came during the Trudeau era as a response to increased media demands in the 1970s (Gwyn & Gwyn, 1980; McCall-Newman, 1982). In 1971, Trudeau's Principal Secretary, Marc Lalonde wrote "The Changing Role of the Prime Minister's Office", where he first described how prime ministers in Canada had grown to use the powers that had always been allotted to them under the Constitution. The Constitution importantly does not mention the PMO or the Cabinet; their powers lie on constitutional conventions and are not entrenched in the law. Lalonde's work thoroughly described the purpose, structure, and growth of the PMO to 1971, and his work is still apt today when it describes the PMO's direct purpose as to "serve the Prime Minister in the exercise of his powers, in the pursuit of his duties, [and] in the discharge of his responsibilities" (Lalonde, 1971, p. 518).

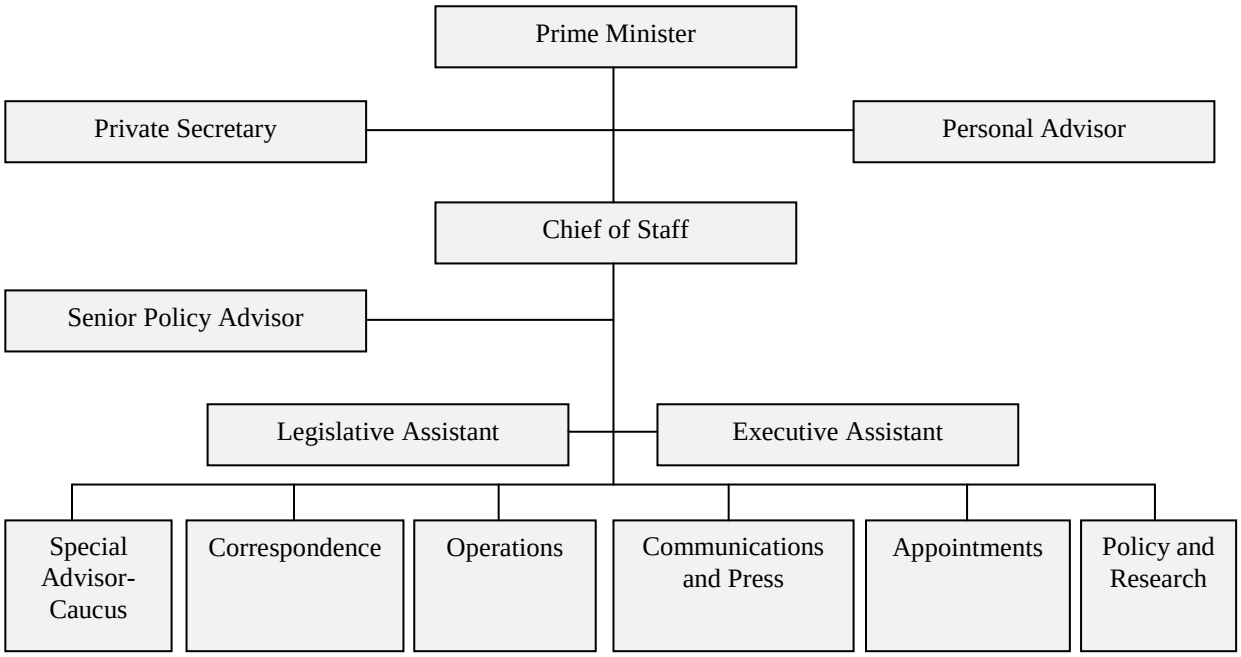
By 1971 under Trudeau, the PMO's structure had grown to consist of 26 officers and 59 support staff, from the modest number of just a few secretaries at the turn of the twentieth century**.** The PMO had a budget of $50 000 under Diefenbaker (Lalonde, 1971, p. 519), which increased to $2.2-million in 1975, and as of 2010 under Harper, $9.89 million (CTV, 2010; Davis, 2010). Lalonde accounts for the growth of the PMO due to an increased demand on the prime minister's time from longer Parliamentary sessions, more bureaucracy, and an increased desire for political communication control by the prime minister and his or her policy advisors.

Similar to Lalonde's description, a former PMO staffer described the PMO as the partisan filter for the prime minister:

> We are just a valve at the junction of the bureaucratic and the political. We add a little of the political ingredient when it appears that it has been overlooked. For instance, if I know that an official in PCO is working on a briefing note to the PM on an issue which I am responsible for, I'll go to him and express the political point of view—I guess we are sort of a Distant Early Warning System for things that are going to cause trouble politically. (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 292)

Figure 3 provides an illustration of the organizational power hierarchy in the PMO.

**Figure 3: The PMO Organizational Structure (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 292)**




The Private Secretary, Personal Advisor, and Chief of Staff make up executive leadership in the PMO. It was the Liberals under Chrétien and Martin who chose to rebuild the PMO following the U.S. model, realigning the executive PMO positions under the "Chief of Staff" and "Principal Secretary", no longer using the traditional Westminster "Secretary" or "Private Secretary" positions. Table 2 below lists the PMO's leadership personnel during minority government.

| Table 2: Minority Prime Ministers and their Key Advisors | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Prime Minister** | **Name** | **Title** | **Term (yyyy.mm.dd)** |
| **Harper, Stephen (2006.02.06 - )** | Novak, Raymond | Principal Secretary | (2008.07.01 - ) |
| | Giorno, Guy | Chief of Staff | (2008.07.01 - ) |
| | Brodie, Ian | Chief of Staff | (2006 – 2008.06.30) |
| **Martin, Paul Edgar Philippe (2003.12.12 – 2006.02.05)** | Murphy, Time | Chief of Staff | (2004 – 2006) |
| | Fox, Francis | Principal secretary | (2004 – 2006) |
| **Clark, Charles Joseph (1979.06.04 – 1980.03.02)** | Neville, William | Chief of Staff | (1979.06.13 – 1980) |
| **Trudeau, Pierre Elliott (1968.04.20 – 1979.06.03)** | Coutts, James A. | Principal secretary | (1975.08.19 – 1979) |
| | O'Connell, Martin | Principal secretary | (1973.02.16 – 1974) |
| **Pearson, Lester Bowles (1963.04.22 – 1968.04.19)** | Lalonde, Marc | Special Adviser | (1967.04 – 1968.07) |
| | Hodgson, John | Principal secretary | (1966 – 1967.04) |
| | Kent, Tom | Policy secretary to the Prime Minister | (1964 – 1965) |
| | Kent, Tom | Coordinator of Programming | (1963 – 1964) |
| **Diefenbaker, John George (1957.06.21 – 1963.04.21)** | Richardson, Bert | Special Assistant | (1962 – 1963) |
| | Fisher, John | Special Assistant | (1961 – 1962) |
| | Guest, Gowen | Executive assistant | (1958 – 1961) |
| | Bedson, Derek | Head PM's office | (1957 – 1958) |
| **King, William Lyon Mackenzie (1921.12.29 – 1926.06.28)** | Campney, Ralph | title unknown | (1924 – 1926) |
| | Moyer, Leslie Clare | Private secretary | (1922 – 1927) |
| | McGregor, Fred A. | Secretary | (1921 – 1922) |
| | Beaudry, Laurent | Private secretary | (1921 – 1922) |
| **Meighen, Arthur (1920.07.10 – 1921.12.28)** | Christie, Loring | Principal Advisor (External Affairs) | (1920 – 1921) |
| | Merriam, Arthur | Principal secretary | (1920 – 1921) |
| **Source:** Parliament of Canada. (2011). Leadership of the Prime Minister's Office: 1867 to Date. Retrieved from http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/FederalGovernment/PrincipalSecretaries.aspx?Language=E | | | |

Savoie's earlier work, *Governing from the Centre* (1999), argued that a shift in the PMO's power had occurred from Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson to Jean Chrétien's governments. Over this period of time the prime minister, his or her office, the Cabinet, and the central agencies assumed unprecedented control of agenda setting and policy decisions. This centralizing shift had occurred to the detriment of parliamentary democracy to the point where some theorists at the turn of the century argued that Canada suffered from a "democratic deficit" (Bakvis & Baier, 2005; Bernier, Brownsey, &

Howlett, 2005; Doern, 2005; O'Hara, 2005; Simpson, 2002; Smith, 2005; Sutherland, 1991; White, 2005).

In terms of real politick, on October 21, 2002, then Liberal leadership hopeful Paul Martin spoke at York University on the topic of the "democratic deficit", and his speech was published verbatim in *Policy Options* (2002, December). In other words, Martin himself helped place the issue of democratic reform onto the agenda in both the government and academia. Martin stated that one commonly heard line in Ottawa reflected the imbalance of power in the PMO that had developed over the past 30 years: "Who do you know in the PMO?", referring to lobbyists' power to influence policy. He called for changes to parliamentary democracy to engage voters and renew citizens' confidence and pride in the political process.

The University of British Columbia Press developed an entire critical reading series in 2005 that focused on the democratic audit of Canadian federal institutions to better understand Canada's democratic deficits (e.g. Smith, 2005; White, 2005). The Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queens University similarly also focused a series of working papers suggesting democratic reforms in 2005 (e.g. Bakvis & Baier, 2005; Bernier, Brownsey, & Howlett, 2005; O'Hara, 2005; Simpson, 2002). These works can help to better situate how the problem was to be handled.

In 2003, the new Martin government proposed a six-point plan to relax the rules on party discipline to address the problems of the democratic deficit (Bakvis, 2005). The planned call for creating an ethics commissioner position and included changes to Private Members Bills and standing committees to increase all MPs' influence on policy over that of the PMO's administrators and other such anti-democratic tendencies in

parliamentary democracy. The plan also included the establishment of a Minister of Democratic Reform and Jacques Saada was appointed to the position (O'Hara, 2005).

Despite the Martin government's focus on accountability and democratic reform, Bakvis argued:

> […] the six-point plan [would] really have only a very limited impact on the power of MPs and the House of Commons overall, citing the fact that the Martin PMO and its staff are behaving in [a] manner that is not all that different from Martin's imperious predecessor. (Bakvis, 2005, p. 2)

By way of example, even with his reforms, Martin changed the PMO to include deputy chiefs of staff to mirror the Executive Office of the President of the United States, and also increased the salaries of the PMO's staff (Bakvis, 2005; Dyck, 2008; McMenemy, 2006). After Martin, Harper similarly maintained the size and structure of the PMO, despite recommendations from the Gomery report that concluded the power of the PMO should be reduced.

Notably, Savoie's works (1999, 2008) did not make suggestions for reforms, but were focused more on describing and diagnosing the problems of centralized power. Jeffrey Simpson's *The Friendly Dictatorship* (2002) and G. Bruce Doern's edited work *How Ottawa Spends, 2005-2006: Managing the Minority* (2005) both pointed to the dangers of Canada becoming a one party state under the Liberals' reign, and positioned Martin's budgets as designed to buy Canadian voters. In contrast to Simpson's work, Stephen Clarkson completed a book in 2005 entitled *The Big Red Machine: How the Liberal Party Dominates Canadian Politics*; however, five years later the Liberals were in disarray and rumours had arisen of a merger between the Liberals and the NDP to unite the left in the same way the right was united under Harper in 2003.

If the PMO's centralization trend was diagnosed in Savoie's *Governing from the Centre* (1999), then it had certainly come to dominate academic and media discussions in the new century under Paul Martin and Stephen Harper's respective minority governments. Savoie's *Court Government and the Collapse of Accountability* (2008) extended the thesis he introduced in *Governing from the Centre*. He argued, explaining the title of his work:

> By *court government*, I do not mean the rise of judicial power. Rather, I mean that effective political power now rests with the prime minister and a small group of carefully selected courtiers. I also mean a shift from formal decision-making processes in cabinet and, as a consequence, in the civil service, to informal processes involving only a handful of key actors. We now make policy by announcement, and we manage government operations by adjusting administrative and financial requirements to the circumstances of the day. (Savoie, 2008, p. 16)

Savoie established how a number of factors, like a lack of accountability, trust, and respect existed now in government, especially among central agency employees and the line departments of the public service. He described the public service's mistrust of the PMO's tight control and focus on short-term policy solutions, having usurped power and respect from the public service's traditional institutionalized means of developing long-term, evidence-based policy capacity to support the prime minister and government.

To explain this phenomenon, Savoie linked the secularization of society and the shift in power to the PMO by arguing that the dominance of the rational choice model pushed organizations to maximize their own self-interest over community-based concerns. Each organization and institution that follows the rational choice model inevitably leads it to competitive power struggles where overlaps of responsibilities occur, and in the case of the PMO, its power has grown unchecked for some time, thereby reducing the power previously imbued in top public service positions.

In this context, Savoie aptly described the segmentation of the PMO's time by government routines, lobbyists, media, and other duties that had become refined into the prime minister's "priorities and policy agenda" as the main site of power in Canadian government, and not the legislature as democratic supporters would hope (Savoie, 2008, p. 310). For ambitious civil servants, understanding the government's agenda became a survival skill. A competition for resources occurred among departments whereby deputy ministers who could gain more resources for their departments by linking with the PMO's agenda became more respected and could also move up the civil servant ladder more readily. For example, Harper's PMO staff went as far as asking staff working for cabinet ministers to "secretly provide an assessment of their bosses' communication skills" to create an informed people inventory to better help achieve its agenda (Savoie, 2008, p. 238).

In 2006, Harper's PMO had grown again to 87 personnel, with 20 executive officers, roughly maintaining the same structure as under the Liberals. By 2010, it was 107 staff members. Media reports state that since 2003, every MP now employs both a press secretary and a communications officer, with roughly 1500 communication officers on the Hill as of 2011 (Rychewaert, 2011). Simpson (2012) similarly described how the number of information officers in federal government grew by "16 per cent, to 4459 from 3855" in the first five years of the Harper government. From these figures alone, the degree to which media-savvy partisan representation increased on the Hill in the past decade was unprecedented.

Harper's PMO was unique in that it implemented the use of government-wide media event proposals (MEPs), which controlled all interactions between caucus

members and the public (Rychewaert, 2011). The PMO or PCO's approval of the MEPs was required before any key media communications event. The MEP form included sections like "Desired Sound Bite" and "Strategic Objective" to ensure the centralized control of messaging.

The Harper Government did not implement Gomery's suggestions to diminish the size of the PMO and outline the PMO's duties formally within a legislative framework, despite having brought in other Gomery provisions in the Accountability Act. The government has also avoided media scrums and through MEPs controlled cabinet ministers and Conservative MPs' interactions with the media. An understanding of Cabinet is required to ascertain how this was not always the case.

**Prime Ministerial Leadership and the Growth of the Cabinet**

Like Savoie and Bakvis, others outside of academia in the public service have noted a similar increase in the PMO's central role in political power since well before the Chrétien and Martin years (Lalonde, 1971; Savoie, 1999; Russell, 2008; Wells, 2007). By way of example, one respondent in Savoie's research aptly described the diminishing powers of a prime minister's Cabinet to effectively change policy agendas as follows: "Cabinet had evolved from a decision-making body under Pearson to a university-type seminar under Trudeau, to a focus group under Trudeau in his later years" (Savoie, 1999, p. 3). Like the PMO, the size of the Federal Cabinet has also grown from King's 16 ministers to Harper's 38 in 2008 (see Table 3 below).

| Table 3: Cabinet Size and Minority Government Prime Ministers | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ministry** | **Changes in Ministry Size** | | |
| **28th Ministry (2006.02.06 - )**<br><br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Harper, Stephen<br>**Government Party:**<br>Conservative Party of Canada | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 2010.08.06 | 37 | 37 |
| | 2010.04.09 | 37 | 37 |
| | 2010.01.19 | 38 | 38 |
| | 2008.10.30 | 38 | 38 |
| | 2008.03.01 | 32 | 27 |
| **27th Ministry (2003.12.12 - 2006.02.05)**<br><br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Martin, Paul Edgar Philippe<br>**Government Party:**<br>Liberal Party of Canada | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 2004.07.07 | 39 | 33 |
| **21st Ministry (1979.06.04 - 1980.03.02)**<br><br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Clark, Charles Joseph<br>**Government Party:**<br>Progressive Conservative Party | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1979.10 | 30 | 30 |
| **20th Ministry (1968.04.20 - 1979.06.03)**<br><br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Trudeau, Pierre Elliott<br>**Government Party:**<br>Liberal Party of Canada | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1978.02 | 33 | 33 |
| | 1977.04 | 32 | 32 |
| | 1976.02 | 28 | 28 |
| | 1975.02 | 29 | 29 |
| | 1974 | 30 | 30 |
| | 1973 | 30 | 30 |
| | 1972.02 | 30 | 30 |
| | 1971 | 29 | 29 |
| | 1970 | 30 | 30 |
| | 1969 | 29 | 29 |
| **19th Ministry (1963.04.22 - 1968.04.19)**<br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Pearson, Lester Bowles<br>**Government Party:**<br>Liberal Party of Canada | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1968 | 28 | 28 |
| | 1967 | 27 | 27 |
| | 1966 | 26 | 26 |
| | 1965 | 26 | 26 |
| | 1964.02 | 26 | 26 |
| **18th Ministry (1957.06.21 - 1963.04.21)**<br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Diefenbaker, John George<br>**Government Party:**<br>Progressive Conservative Party | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1963 | 21 | 21 |
| | 1961.12 | 24 | 24 |
| | 1961 | 24 | 24 |
| | 1959.11 | 23 | 23 |
| | 1958.11 | 23 | 23 |
| | 1957.12 | 22 | 22 |

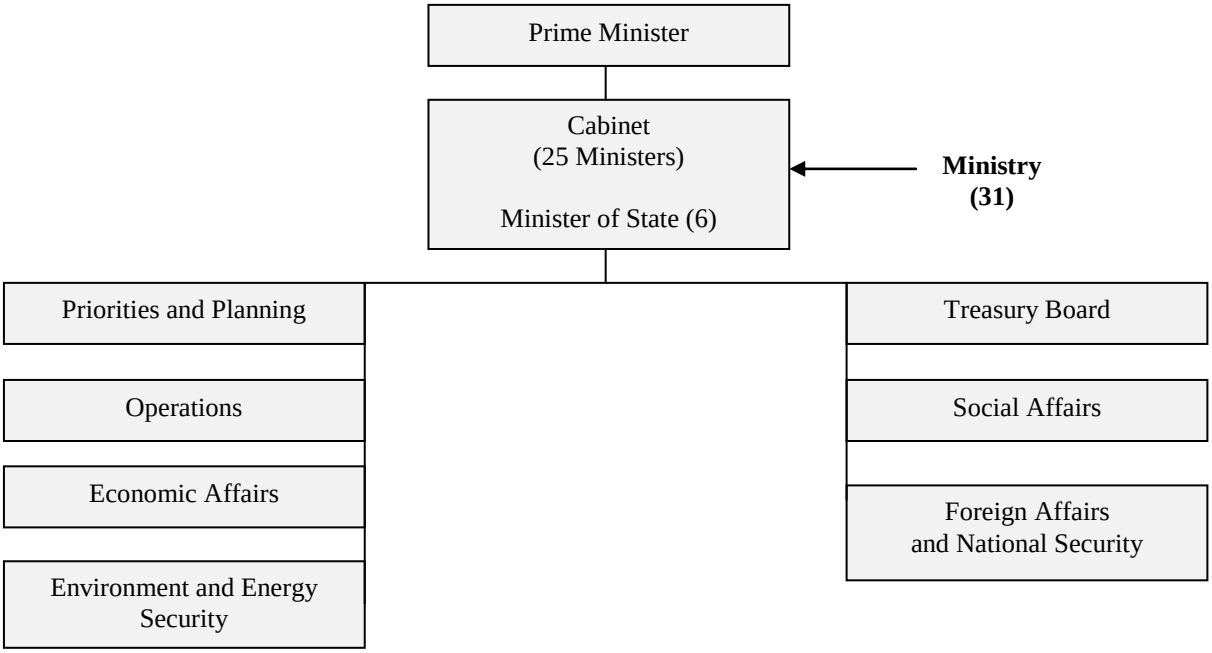
| Table 3: Cabinet Size and Minority Government Prime Ministers (Continued) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ministry** | **Changes in Ministry Size** | | |
| **18th Ministry (1957.06.21 - 1963.04.21)**<br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Diefenbaker, John George<br>**Government Party:**<br>Progressive Conservative Party | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1963 | 21 | 21 |
| | 1961.12 | 24 | 24 |
| | 1961 | 24 | 24 |
| | 1959.11 | 23 | 23 |
| | 1958.11 | 23 | 23 |
| | 1957.12 | 22 | 22 |
| **12th Ministry (1921.12.29 - 1926.06.28)**<br>**Prime Minister:**<br>King, William Lyon Mackenzie<br>**Government Party:**<br>Liberal Party of Canada | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1926.03 | 16 | 16 |
| | 1925.03 | 20 | 20 |
| | 1924.05 | 19 | 19 |
| | 1923.05 | 18 | 18 |
| | 1922.06 | 19 | 19 |
| **11th Ministry (1920.07.10 - 1921.12.28)**<br><br>**Prime Minister:**<br>Meighen, Arthur<br>**Government Party:**<br>National Liberal and Conservative Party (1921) | **Date (yyyy.mm.dd)** | **Ministry Size** | **Cabinet Size** |
| | 1921.05 | 16 | 16 |
| **Source:** Parliament of Canada. (2011). Size of Ministries. Retrieved from http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/FederalGovernment/MinistrySize.aspx | | | |

The PMO and Cabinet make up the executive branch of government, and they are identified as the main sources of partisan policy development, along with the PCO's resources (see chapter one, or Schacter & Haid, 1999).[5] The use of these institutions must therefore be a part of assessing any prime minister's abilities to form and control agendas through their leadership skills.

Figure 4 below illustrates a sample organizational chart from Harper's 2006 Conservative Government to visualize the PMO's organizational relationship with Cabinet and its committees. The Treasury Board is the only committee named in the Constitution.

[5] The PCO's organization structure can be found at the following URL: PCO. 2010 "Organizational Structure." PCO. Retrieved from http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=Org

**Figure 4: Harper's Ministry and Cabinet in 2006 (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 289)**




As presented above, the size of Cabinet and ministerial titles can change depending on each government's agendas and priorities, with the exception of the Treasury Board. Understanding how Cabinet changes based on the agendas of each government is a message in framing itself, as the PMO's changes in ministers are often interpreted as either favourable promotions for good performance, or conversely demotions as a sign that a minister's performance on a portfolio was less than what the prime minister and caucus had hoped.

Framing can also be understood in terms of regional and gender representation in the Cabinet (see Table 4 below).

| Table 4: Cabinet Regional and Gender Representation 2004-2011 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Region** | **2004** | **2006** | **2008** |
| Québec | 8 | 6 | 6 |
| Ontario | 16 | 10 | 12 |
| West | 8 | 12 | 7 |
| East | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| North | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 30 | 24 | 19 |
| Female | 9 | 7 | 10 |

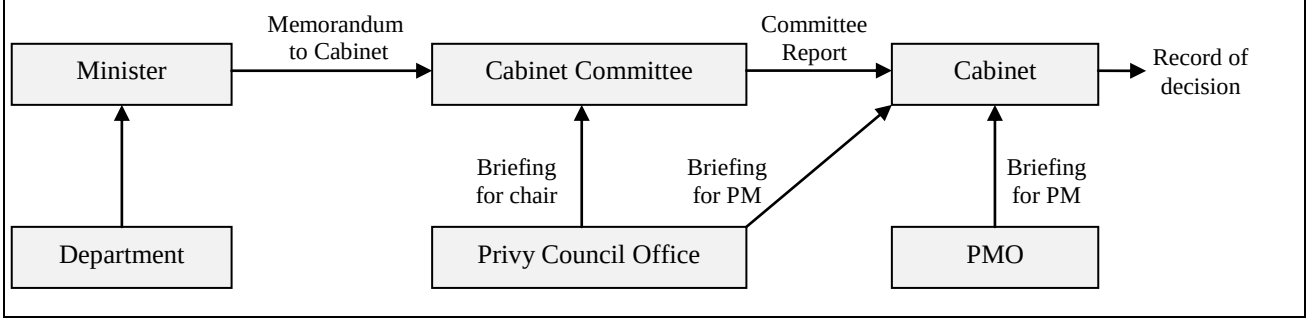
The prime minister's Cabinet is selected from the party's members in the House of Commons and the Senate to build the best team to fulfill the government's agenda; this selection also simultaneously situates the optics of the government's intended agenda.

Jackson and Jackson (2009) categorized the modern Cabinets of Pearson, Trudeau, Clark, Martin, and Harper on a scale from decentralized to centralized. Pearson's full Cabinet was "the major vehicle for Cabinet decision-making: it reviewed almost every decision taken in committee" (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 288). Trudeau and Clark's Cabinets were decentralized further through the Policy and Expenditure Management System (PEMS) that gave more power to the ministers in the growing Cabinet. However, since Chrétien, Martin and Harper centralized power in the Cabinet, making it the main steering body for all decisions, with Martin even eliminating the Priorities and Planning Committee to solidify its roles in the Cabinet, though Harper re-instated the committee in 2006.

Figure 5 below outlines the formal Cabinet policy process that prime ministers and the PMO must manage along with each ministry to ensure their agendas are managed and achieved.

The “memorandum to cabinet” and “committee reports” are formal documents that are numbered and awarded security classifications. Each of these key communications is required steps in the workflow for a decision to be reached on any agenda item.

**Figure 5: Cabinet Policy Process 2008 (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 290)**




Jackson and Jackson highlight that “How successful a cabinet is depends to a large extent on its management of several critical factors, including taxation, expenditures and the legislative program. By controlling these, as well as the machinery of government and senior personnel, the government is able to effect major decisions” (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 291). Together the PMO and the Cabinet create and control the agenda through these key levers of power. The executive style of each prime minister are reflected in the design of their Cabinet, and their leadership skills are reflected in how they are able to guide and control its processes.

Others have ranked past prime minister in terms of their leadership qualities and the outcomes of their governments. Granatstein and Hillmer’s *Prime Ministers: Ranking Canada’s Leaders* (1999) ranked the five minority government prime ministers on a five-point scale as follows in their list of Canada’s twenty-five prime ministers to the turn of the millennium: (1) Mackenzie King (“Great”), (5) Trudeau (“High Average”), (6) Pearson (“High Average”), (13) John Diefenbaker (“Average”), (14) Arthur Meighen (“Low Average”), and (15) Joe Clark (“Low Average”). Their ranking was based on a

survey of a number of scholars across Canada. The chief criteria for "greatness" were that leaders held office for a significant length of time, fulfilled their agendas, and had the support of the Canadian public for most of their tenure. The authors warned in the book's preface that rankings clearly can change over time as the lens of history offers more information and as public opinion is shaped, but their work, among others (e.g. Bliss, 1994; Hutchison, 1964; Ondaatje & Swainson, 1975), can be informative for understanding the strengths and shortcomings of each leader.

In most accounts, historical records demonstrate that having a strong leader dominate the Cabinet during minority government crisis periods would be the desired end for achieving smooth party stewardship towards a majority government following a cessation to minority government. Mackenzie Bowell served as the top example of how a Cabinet revolt could remove a prime minister from office even during a majority situation (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p. 12). Seven of Bowell's ministers resigned over his handling of a Manitoba school crisis for the public funding of religious schools. Granatstein and Hillmer's ranking listed Bowell's leadership experience as second last on their list of the two prime ministers who were "Failures". Kim Campbell was placed last on the list, and they argued her placement was due to her record being more recent in Canadians' memories than that of Bowell's.

In contrast to Bowell's example, Mackenzie King, Diefenbaker, Pearson, and Trudeau each demonstrated skills and examples for how controlling the Cabinet and the party agenda can lead to electoral success when coming out of a minority government. Of the prime ministers of minority government in Canada to date, each man has been notably different in background. Six of them were family men with children during their

minority government eras: the mathematician Meighen, the historian Pearson, the lawyer Trudeau, the political scientist Clark, the businessman Martin, and the "economist" Harper—but of these six, Trudeau was the lone Quebecker; Meighen, Martin and Pearson were Ontarians; and Harper, like Diefenbaker, was raised in Ontario but moved to the prairies later in life. The lawyer Diefenbaker was married twice, but had no children; the Ontarian King never married.

Each leader worked their way through their respective parties to gain office through succession, with Joe Clark, Arthur Meighen, Stephen Harper, and Mackenzie King having notably taken the office of prime minister at relatively younger ages compared to the others (39, 46, 46, and 47 years old respectively). Regionalism, age, and professions aside, no evident commonality for the mould of the perfect minority government leader appears based on their biographies alone; instead, the character, skills, political teams, and resources available to each leader must be assessed to understand their successful uses of agenda-setting political strategies.

**The Key Actors and Factors of Minority Government Agenda Setting**

In 2000, Dobell researched what might happen to parliament if the Canadian electorate became more splintered through an increased number of political parties competing for their support. He surveyed Canada's past minority governments and found that the chessboard pieces for possible political alliances in minority government changed depending on how many seats each party gained. Dobell noted (well before the 2004 Martin minority government) that the key factor for any minority government's stability was "the size of the governing party's minority and the number of MPs elected by each of

the other parties" (Dobell, 2000, p. 17). Table 5 presents the total seat counts by party for all of Canada's minority governments since Confederation.

**Table 5: Minority Government Party Composition of the House of Commons**

| Party | LPC | CPC | Progressive | Labour | SC | CCF/NDP | Crédiste | Bloc | Ind. | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1921 | 117 | 50 | 64 | 3 | | | | | 1 | 235 |
| 1925 | 101 | 116 | 24 | 2 | | | | | 2 | 245 |
| 1926 | 116 | 91 | 13 | 3 | 11 | 9 | | | 2 | 245 |
| 1957 | 107 | 112 | | | 19 | 25 | | | 2 | 265 |
| 1962 | 100 | 116 | | | 30 | 19 | | | | 265 |
| 1963 | 129 | 95 | | | 24 | 17 | | | | 265 |
| 1965 | 131 | 97 | | | 5 | 21 | 9 | | 2 | 265 |
| 1972 | 109 | 107 | | | | 31 | 15 | | | 262 |
| 1979 | 114 | 136 | | | | 26 | 6 | | | 282 |
| 2004 | 135 | 99 | | | | 19 | | 54 | 1 | 308 |
| 2006 | 103 | 124 | | | | 29 | | 51 | 1 | 308 |
| 2008 | 77 | 143 | | | | 37 | | 49 | 2 | 308 |

It was difficult to predict how a minority government would operate without knowing the seat total for each party because the seat total affected whether or not a prime minister retained support from his or her Cabinet and the House. Without support from these two institutional bodies minority governments can fail quickly and lead to confidence votes.

Dobell used an institutionalist approach to his history of minority government. The most common assumption he could identify based on past minority government situations, prior to the 2004-2011 minority government period, was that a Liberal/NDP minority government would make the most stable partnership. He also noted that Canada's first two minority governments periods also led to long periods of single-party majority dynasties. Tables 6 and 7 below are taken from Dobell's work that summarized the first 9 minority governments in Canada until 2000, excluding the Martin and Harper terms (which are discussed in chapter five).

| Table 6: Early Modern Minority Governments from 1921- 1926 (Dobell, 2000, p.6) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date of Election** | **Tenure** (Length of Parliament) | **Governing Party and Leader** | **Partner Party** | **Reasons for Next Election** |
| December 6, 1921 (14th Parliament) | March 8, 1922 to September 5, 1925 | Liberal Mackenzie King | Progressive | Called by government. |
| October 29, 1925 (15th Parliament) | January 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926 | Liberal, Mackenzie King | Progressive | On June 26, 1926, King asked the Governor General to dissolve Parliament and call a general election. The GG refused and King resigned. The GG then called upon Arthur Meighen leader of the Liberal-Conservatives, to form a government. |
| Continuation of 15th Parliament<br><br>On June 29, 1926, Meighen formed a government with the support of a minority of the members of the House: (government 126; combined opposition 129). | June 29, 1926 to July 2, 1926 | Conservative, Arthur Meighen | None | The government lasted only three days, lsoing a vote (96-95) on what amounted to a motion of censure of the government. Parliament was dissolved. |

| Table 7: Modern Minority Governments from 1957- 1979 (Dobell, 2000, p.7) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date of Election** | **Tenure** (Length of Parliament) | **Governing Party and Leader** | **Partner Party** | **Reasons for Next Election** |
| June 10, 1957 (23rd Parliament) | October 14, 1957 to February 6, 1958 | Progressive Conservative John Diefenbaker | None | Called by government. |
| June 18, 1962 (25th Parliament) | September 27, 1962 to February 6, 1963 | Progressive Conservative John Diefenbaker | None | Vote of non-confidence: the Diefenbaker minority government was defeated on a supply motion. |
| April 8, 1963 (26th Parliament) | May 16, 1963 to September 8, 1965 | Liberal Lester Pearson | Social Credit and NDP | Called by government. |
| November 8, 1965 (27th Parliament) | January 18, 1966 to April 23, 1968 | Liberal Lester Pearson | Social Credit and NDP | Called by government. |
| October 30, 1972 (29th Parliament) | January 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974 | Liberal Pierre Trudeau | NDP | Lost a vote on an NDP budget motion sub-amendment. Parliament dissolved. |
| May 22nd, 1979 (31st Parliament) | October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979 | Progressive Conservative Joe Clark | None | Lost a vote on a budget motion sub-amendment by 139-133. Parliament dissolved. |

Dobell's analysis demonstrated the only consistent criterion that could be found common among previous minorities was that they have tended to be short lived. Table 8 below tallies the total number of sitting days for each minority parliament.

| **Table 8: Minority Parliaments Durations** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PM - Parliament** | **Dates** | **Number of Sitting Days** |
| Pearson - 26th Parliament | 1963 - 1965 | 418 |
| Pearson - 27th Parliament | 1965 - 1968 | 405 |
| King - 14th Parliament | 1921 - 1925 | 366 |
| Harper - 39th Parliament | 2006 - 2008 | 294 |
| Harper - 40th Parliament | 2008 – 2011 | 292 |
| Trudeau – 29th Parliament | 1972 – 1974 | 256 |
| Martin – 38th Parliament | 2004 – 2006 | 160 |
| King -15th Parliament | 1925 – 1926 | 108 |
| Diefenbaker – 23rd Parliament | 1957 – 1958 | 78 |
| Diefenbaker – 25th Parliament | 1962 – 1963 | 72 |
| Clark – 31st Parliament | 1979 – 1980 | 49 |
| Meighen – 15th Parliament (Cont'd) | 1926 | 3 |
| **Source:** Parliament of Canada. (2011). "Sitting Days of the House of Commons." Retrieved January 2011, from http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/SittingDays.aspx?Menu=HOC-Procedure&Chamber=03d93c58-f843-49b3-9653-84275c23f3fb | | |

Notably, Harper's two minority governments have been among the longest to sit. On average, the length of minority governments had been a year and eight months (Dobell, 2000; Ferris & Voia, 2009).

From the past examples, Dobell identified the one dominant commonality for creating stable minority governments was through power-sharing, which is found in the five instances when the Liberals partnered with an opposition party to form government:

1. William Lyon Mackenzie King, March 8, 1922-September 5, 1925, partnered with the Progressive Party (14th Parliament).

2. William Lyon Mackenzie King, January 7, 1926-June 26, 1926, partnered with the Progressive Party (15th Parliament).

3. Lester Pearson, May 16, 1963-September 8, 1965, partnered with the Social Credit party and NDP (26th Parliament).

4. Lester Pearson, May 16, 1963-September 8, 1965, partnered with the Social Credit party and NDP (27th Parliament).

5. Pierre Trudeau, January 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974, partnered with the NDP (29th Parliament).

In each instance, an agreed upon agenda was created to help maintain the government's stability through power-sharing with another party or multiple parties. Many minority governments have been able to create effective and lasting policy despite the short-life of power sharing agreements. For example, in June 2003 *Policy Options* voted Pearson the best prime minister in fifty years because of his government's achievements over two minority periods; he was judged in terms of various measures such as legislative output, stability, and duration (Jackson & Jackson, 2009, p. 279).

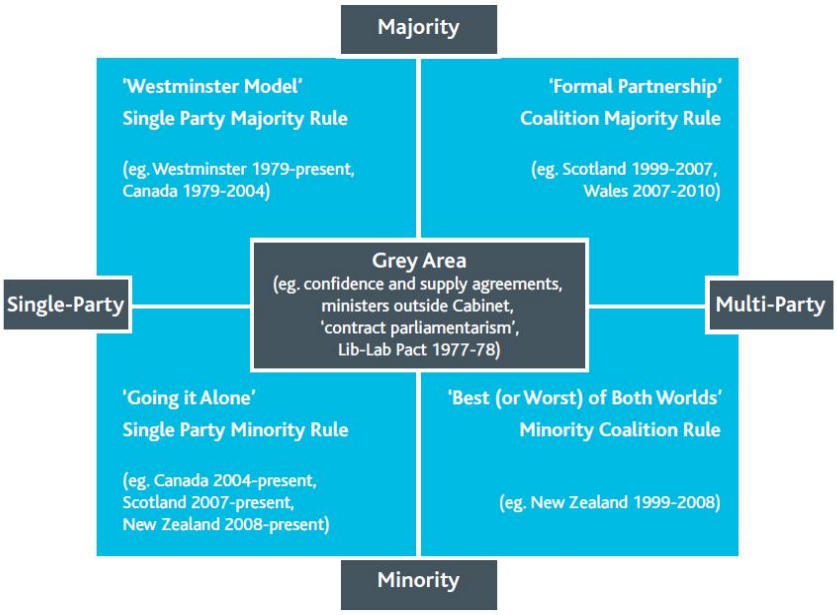
Other minority governments have failed quickly for reasons such as trying to govern as if they had won a majority (e.g. Clark's Progressive Conservatives, from October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979), or in the case of Arthur Meighen's Conservatives (June 28, 1926 to July 2, 1926), because of standing legislation that lost by one vote three days into the term when King rallied enough votes from the Progressives to defeat the government. Clark and Meighen's cases are examples of how not having control of the government agenda can quickly lead to the dissolution of a minority parliament when other parties hold the ruling government to account (these cases are discussed at length in the following chapters).

Generally, Dobell observed in these cases that the number of seats in the House determined whether or not policies passed and confidence in the prime minister and the government agenda was sustained.

Since Dobell's work, the spectrum of contemporary thought concerning minority parliaments has become split between two competing views. On one hand, minority governments have been viewed negatively. For instance, a recent United Kingdom report on "hung" governments described Canada's minority government situation as an example of a dysfunctional minority government model that has led to repeated elections, the slowing down of House operations, and overall creating national political instability (Hazell & Paun, 2009; UCL, 2009).

Hazell and Paun's *Making Minority Government Work* (2009) provided a useful comparison of Westminster minority governments in Canada, New Zealand, Scotland, and Wales. They created a typology of government forms to describe the different models of Westminster government (see Figure 6): Majority rule, single-party minority rule, coalition majority rule, and coalition minority rule.

**Figure 6: A Typology of Government Forms (Hazell and Paun, 2009)**




Of the four types of government forms, Canada's single party minority rule and New Zealand's multi-party minority coalition rule were viewed as the most unstable. Their

evidence was based on the length of the parliament under those two types of government, media analyses, and popular opinion; they did not include analyses of the policies created or government outlays as evidence in terms of what the governments accomplished.

On the other hand, Peter H. Russell's *Two Cheers for Minority Government* (2008) argued that minority government in Canada, "far from being a threatening prospect, was a promising opportunity to reverse the illiberal trends of one-party majority governments that were undermining parliamentary democracy" (Russell, 2008, p. ix). His "two cheers" are taken from an often cited E.M. Forster epigraph about democracy: "So two cheers for Democracy; one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism. Two cheers are quite enough; there is no occasion to give three. [Only Love, the Beloved Republic, deserves that]" (Forster, 1951; e.g. Savoie, 1991). Russell's work challenged the predominant view that minority governments are bad for a nation's stability in terms of economic and political power. Instead, he observed that minority governments have the power to hold ruling governments to account, which could potentially help to address the democratic deficit of long-standing majority parliaments that have centralized power in the PMO.

To defend his view, Russell analyzed the four types of government that were possible in parliamentary democracy:

1. **A True Majority (TM) Government**: is a government where the ruling party has 50% or more of the seats in the House, and 50% or more of the popular vote.

2. **A False Majority (FM) Government**: occurs when the ruling party has 50% or more of the seats in the House, but less than 50% of the popular vote.

3. **A Coalition Government (CG)**: occurs when a large party has a "plurality in the legislature but not a majority" (Russell, 2008, p. 7); in this event, the party gains a majority by offering cabinet seats or some form of alliance to another smaller

party.

4. **A Minority Government (MG)**: occurs when the ruling party has less than 50% of the House seats and less than 50% of the popular vote.

Table 9 below uses the categories listed above to summarize the types of federal governments that have existed in Canada to 2006.

| **Table 9: Types of Government Since 1867 (Russell, 2008, p. 10)** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Type** | **1867-1917** | **1921-2006** | **TOTAL** |
| TM | 11 | 3 | 14 |
| FM | 1 | 12 | 13 |
| CG | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| MG | 0 | 12 | 12 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 27 | 40 |

Many will be familiar with these four types of government, but notably there has been only one coalition government at the federal level since confederation (see Table 9). The sole coalition was Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden's Unionist Government that came together to force conscription through parliament against the desires of Quebeckers and rural Canadians who did not want to fight in a British-led war.[6] Russell argued that more minority governments have existed since 1935, because "third parties" have won at least 20% of the vote, and this has led to few true majority governments being elected in that time (Russell, 2008, p. 13).

From his analysis, Russell believed some important differences existed in contemporary minority government circumstances that made them a better option for Canadians than majority governments in terms of supporting increased parliamentary democracy compared to the past.

First, Russell argued that the government could no longer call a snap election any

[6] Many do not consider this a true coalition government because Liberal members crossed the floor to give the Conservatives enough members to maintain power; no official agreement between the two parties was reached, since the Laurier Liberals continued to oppose the policy of conscription. Chapter nine discusses Coalition Government in Canada in more detail, focusing on the 2008 crisis specifically.

time it wished like previous governments, thanks to the Harper government's new fixed-election-date legislation in 2006 (Russell, 2008, p. 66). Russell believed this fixed term would make the elected parties have to work together in order to keep government stable, otherwise opposition parties could choose when the government would fall.[7]

Second, Russell argued that a key difference for Harper's minority government from majority parliaments was that the opposition parties had a majority on all parliamentary committees. This difference made it such that without a formal partnership the opposition parties could slow down committee business to a snail's pace and have plenty of input into policy.

Third and last, Russell argued the government had to continue debating in the House, despite Harper saying he would not cooperate with opposition parties (Russell, 2008, p. 60). In Russell's view, further debate made modern minority government more accountable to the people. Question period especially had been noted to be dysfunctional and developed as a place for MPs to use spectacle to grab media attention during minority governments, but many view it as having made Canadians more disrespectful and suspicious of public office than ever before.

In short, these arguments are Russell's "cheers for minority government" that he believed supported the case that increased parliamentary democracy exists during minority government periods as compared to majority governments. Because of those three key differences, Russell argued that Harper was the first Canadian prime minister who was learning how to be an effective minority government leader using tactics taken

[7] Russell's work ended before Harper went against his own election accountability legislation to, in fact, ask the Governor General on September 7, 2008, to call an election before the end of the fixed term. At the time, Harper blamed Liberal party leader Stéphane Dion for the dysfunctional parliamentary environment as the justification for a need an election, but by-elections and polls suggested other reasons such as an opportunity to gain a Conservative majority.

from Canada's past minority governments and other countries where minority governments are more common. Looking at European countries, Russell found Canada's minority governments could offer other benefits beyond increases in democratic accountability. For instance, countries with longer histories of minority government politics had larger, stronger welfare states because concessions to the left were often an outcome to maintain power in minority governing situations (Russell, 2008, p. 93).

Russell also found further evidence to support minority governing strategies, in that the longest lasting minority governments have been those where the opposition parties have no options other than to support the ruling party, and the ruling agenda is helped through the legislature because of the limitations on the opposition parties, or due to assurances based on fixed partnerships (Russell, 2008, p. 85). For such reasons, prime ministers of minority governments have to keep firmly in the media's eye and explain decisions to the Canadian public more readily than majority governments. Overall, Russell found these factors to encourage healthy political debate that supported strong civil society institutions that concurrently also fostered increases in citizen participation and democracy.

Russell's account, similar to Savoie's works (1999, 2008), supported the view that a strong centralized PMO was used to control minority government situations. More empirical research is required to assess these arguments, and therefore, a detailed history of agenda-setting practices during minority government situations is a required next step in this review. The next two chapters focus on the minority governments analyzed in Dobell and Russell's works, but they also go beyond them to include their surrounding PMOs and Cabinets.

## Conclusion

From the review above, it is clear that both the PMO and Cabinet have grown demonstrably under Harper during minority government, particularly the PMO since 2010. The PMO serves as a buffer and tool of the prime minister to steer government power. From an institutional perspective alone, the PMO's new orientation under Harper, with his 107 person staff of courtiers, would definitely be viewed as monarchical in nature, rather than that of the collaborative Cabinet-brokered power formation under Pearson and his 40 member PMO in 1968. But has the centralized power in the PMO been able to better control its legislative agenda as compared to past minority governments?

As Russell noted, the key tests of a minority government's success was whether or not it could fulfill its agenda through legislative output, and its ability to avoid votes of confidence on the Throne Speeches, budgets, and government bills. Minority governments can have their agendas slowed down through other means, during parliamentary committees that are dominated by the opposition, dealing with extra House business such as opposition motions and Private Members Bills (PMBs), and not having a majority in the Senate (e.g. Harper had to contend with a Liberal dominated Senate). Overall, past minority governments that were categorized by others as successful, utilized the levers of power to maintain House and electoral support, and were usually rewarded with majority governments.

A review of past minority government agendas is required to answer the broader research question of whether or not a centralized PMO has been able to better control its agenda in the Internet age. Chapter three continues the history of Canada's minority

governments focusing on the early modern prime ministers' uses of framing to attain and maintain power. It particularly provides an example of King's ability to share power with the Progressive party in his first minority government, while learning how to use the newspapers and early forays in radio to shape his message.

The following chapter focuses on modern minority government from Diefenbaker to Trudeau, and identifies how the pace of framing has increased as new technologies like television and polling became pervasive in political communication strategies.

Each of these chapters surveys the three required factors for minority government success that were identified above: (i) the Prime Minister's decision making and leadership skills, (ii) the make-up and support of their Cabinet, and (iii) the power balance in the House. These three factors are crucial for the PMO to control Kingdon's three streams (i.e. problem streams, policy streams, and political streams) for agenda setting to occur. As Savoie identified, they are required areas of analysis for understanding the problem of how a centralized PMO decreases the power of parliamentary democracy.

## Chapter Three
## Agenda Setting and Early Modern Minority Government

The analysis in the next two chapters is organized chronologically to demonstrate the evolution of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO)'s use of agenda-setting strategies over time, focusing on the following prime ministers of minority governments:

1. William Lyon Mackenzie King (14th Parliament: March 8, 1922 to September 5, 1925; and 15th Parliament: January 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926)

2. Arthur Meighen (15th Parliament Continued: June 29, 1926 to July 2, 1926)

3. John Diefenbaker (23rd Parliament: October 14, 1957 to February 6, 1958; and 25th Parliament: September 27, 1962 to February 6, 1963)

4. Lester B. Pearson (26th Parliament: May 16, 1963 to September 8, 1965; and 27th Parliament: January 18, 1966 to April 23, 1968)

5. Pierre Elliot Trudeau (29th Parliament: January 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974)

6. Joe Clark (31st Parliament: October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979)

This chapter focuses on the first two minority governments in Canada, which of course did not have any PMO to support their communication strategies. King and Meighen's early modern battles are used in this dissertation to provide a standard template for analyzing first-level and second-level agenda-setting attributes, which are respectively known as the "issue" and its "frame" (as was discussed in chapter one).

The dominant minority government issue in Canada's first official minority government is analyzed to demonstrate the balancing of interests King framed on the popular national election issue of international trade tariffs to set his agenda. King's use of framing in the 14th Parliament on the key issue of international trade tariffs is summarized in Table 10 that splits the "issue-unit" from the "frame", thereby categorizing them according to agenda-setting terminology.

| Table 10: Examples of Issue Framing in King's First Minority Government | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Prime Minister** | **Issue (first-level)** | **Frame (second-level)** | **Result** |
| **King:** March 8, 1922 to September 5, 1925 (14th Parliament) | Trade tariffs. | King split the opposition Progressive party's support by agreeing to a lower free market based tariff system, while some Progressives wanted a government regulated system. King also targeted the third party Tory leader, Arthur Meighen, who proposed pro-business and high tariff policies. | **Mixed:** The tactic allowed King to remain in power until he called an election, but in the 1926 election he lost his own seat, and the Liberal party was reduced to 100 seats in the House. |

Table 10 presents how the issue unit of "trade tariffs" was framed by King to broker support from the Progressive party's left of center members, while isolating their more radical members along with the Conservative party. The hand King could play was narrow because of his 116 seat minority government (shy one seat of a majority), allowing the official opposition Progressive party with 69 seats the balance of power.

Similarly, another dominant issue for the King-Meighen period was Governor General Viscount Byng's use of constitutional power that allowed Meighen to form a government after King lost the 1925 election. King framed Byng's act as an abuse of Canada's sovereignty by a British loyalist, and the result was that many opposition MPs (with the support of Canadians) voted to end Meighen's minority government, making it the shortest in Canadian history. These two competing frames are summarized as in Table 11.

| Table 11: Examples of Issue Framing in King's Second Minority Government | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Prime Minister** | **Issue (first-level)** | **Frame (second-level)** | **Result** |
| **King:** January 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926 (15th Parliament) | The Governor General's use of constitutional power. | The Governor General was working against Canadian sovereignty and anti- democracy | **Successful:** The end of Meighen's minority government and a return to majority power. |
| **Meighen:** June 29, 1926 to July 2, 1926 (15th Parliament Continued) | The Governor General's use of constitutional power. | The Governor General was following the rules of parliamentary democracy. | **Failed:** Led to the loss of his leadership after not regaining power. |

Meighen's frame failed because more Canadians supported King's fresh portrayal of the nation as independent of British power, capturing the new wave of post-WWI nationalism. The groundswell of support from Canadians for King's leadership on the issue led to his first majority in 1926. The issue/frame template will be used throughout this dissertation in this way to demonstrate the key agenda issues that mattered to set the agenda and win the day for the government.

The experiences of early modern minority government are analyzed to demonstrate how it operated within the three limiting factors identified in the previous chapter: (i) a prime minister's decision making and leadership skills, (ii) the make-up and support of their Cabinet, and (iii) the balance of power in the House. The use of framing is the key steering factor that represents the prime minister's agenda-setting and leadership abilities during minority government. As well, the development of a fourth key factor, that of prime minister's use of new technological media, is identified and tracked in the next two chapters from a political communications perspective to assess its impact on agenda setting. A media studies perspective of King and Meighen's use of the

newspaper and radio are offered to present how each media shift was used to help set the prime minister's agenda in the early modern era.

To that end, Communication theory offers some answers to place the evolution of political media within an historical context and better describe how technology has been used "spin" the government's agenda. In particular, theorist John Durham Peters' *Speaking into the Air: a History of the Idea of Communication* (1999) described the links and connections to religion and the missionary persuasion of the masses that all modern communication has at its roots, not just political communication. His investigations present some perhaps familiar examples of how socio-political cycles have been affected by processes and technologies that arose from the religion-dominated contexts of:

1) Christian "communion" among individuals, linked through spiritual communion with a god, as etymologically the root of mass "communication",

2) the early uses of tools like the church bell and clock towers to ritualize social patterns to get the masses to pray on time,

3) or, the Gutenberg printing press's first uses to disseminate the sacred text of the bible, which inevitably led to newspapers being printed on the same presses to enforce state policy or religious creeds, as well as disseminate news.[8]

In these examples, Durham Peters described how today's media strategies developed from the preceding religious communication of the pulpit to the masses. Early modern media technologies were linked directly to human political formations prior to the 1920s in that the church that was aligned with political power, before its formal separation from the state in a number of Western nations' constitutions.

[8] Similar and alternative histories of communication revolutions that have impacted the West's change from a literate society to a networked information society can be found in the Communication theories of Immanuel Castells (1996; 1997; 2000), Jürgen Habermas (1991), Armand Mattelart (2003), and Marshall McLuhan (1962; 1995). Some of these works will be touched upon in later chapters, but Durham Peters' work specifically provides links to religion's relationship with communication and is used here as an introduction to the problem that controlling agendas is affected by changes in media practices and technology.

Durham Peters identified five dominant ideas of modern communication, or schools of communication, that have persisted in Communication Theory since the 1920s: "(i) communication as the management of mass opinion (e.g. theorists like Lippman, Bernays, and Lasswell); (ii) the elimination of semantic fog (e.g. Ogden and Richards, descending from Locke); (iii) vain sallies from the citadel of the self (e.g. Kafka or Lukács); (iv) the disclosure of otherness (e.g. Heidegger and the German Idealists); and (v) the orchestration of action (e.g. Dewey)" (Durham Peters, 1999, p. 19). These schools of communication provide a toolbox for those who practice the arts of framing messages to attract 'worshippers' (or in modern times, for popular public opinion support). Each tool is commonly known to today's political strategists and political communication scholars by other names like: (i) conducting public opinion research, (ii) forming consensus, (iii) creating propaganda, (iv) generating alienation or dissensus, and (v) engaging grassroots voters through democratic participatory action.

Alongside the five "ideas" of communication, Durham Peters described how communication revolutions have been ordered via new technological media that have "a therapeutic or prosthetic healing" capacity for human communication problems (e.g. chronologically, the printing press, photography, film, radio, television, and presently the Internet). Each new technology has extended human capacities for recording and manipulating sight, sound, and mental experiences. Following Durham Peters' broad international work, a need exists to similarly note the effects of new media ruptures and historical changes to framing and political agenda setting in the Canadian context, which has not been accounted for previously in terms of minority governments over time.

Three periods of Canadian political framing can be discerned parallel to Durham Peters' Communication Theory:

1. **The Early Modern Era:** Canadian Confederation until the end of the World War II when politicians ensured issue framing by owning newspapers in every region of Canada (e.g. The Kent Commission Report, 1981).

2. **The Modern Era:** The Post World War II period of new communication research when politicians were challenged to frame issues through new technologies and coordinated techniques in print, film, radio, and television.

3. **The Networked Era:** The advent of the Internet in 1992 and onward to present day social media uses that have created an instantaneous 24-hour feedback loop that demands the "permanent campaigning" of political leaders (Elmer, 2008; Kozolanka, 2009).

The early modern era is explored in this chapter as an example of protean issue framing, and the following chapter also adopts the same format while focusing on the modern era. To be sure, the early modern newspaper framing of Canadian political culture cannot be mistaken for the Trudeau "War Room" of the 1970s under James A. Coutts that started to carve up the Canadian political geography by tracking public opinion for each riding to ensure Liberal representatives would be elected (Gwyn, 1980), and certainly it bares even less resemblance to Liberal blogger Warren Kinsella's *The War Room* (2007) that built on James Carville's U.S. example of "quick response" and immediate "opposition research" counter attacks during the Clinton election campaigns in the 1990s.

For this treatment, academic accounts are used to provide background and evidence for the early modern strategies in the following chapter. It would be difficult to provide primary evidence of early framing methods in detail, until all of early modern Canada's federal *Hansard* is digitized for example (currently easy online access is only available starting in 1994), or similarly a complete archive of party platforms and other

historical partisan media are created (but those are other research projects entirely).

### William Lyon Mackenzie King and Arthur Meighen

**Early Modern Minority Government Periods:**
1) King: March 8, 1922 to September 5, 1925 (14th Parliament)
2) King: January 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926 (15th Parliament)
3) Meighen: June 29, 1926 to July 2, 1926 (15th Parliament Continued)

William Lyon Mackenzie King (December 17, 1874 – July 22, 1950) and Arthur Meighen (June 16, 1874 – August 5, 1960) were the first two prime ministers to lead early modern minority governments in their battles in the 1920s. They are suitably mentioned here together as a protean example of contemporary agenda-setting and framing tactics. Ferns and Ostry's biography *The Age of Mackenzie King* (1955 [1976]) ends before King's volatile minority government years of the 1920s and focused on King's early life and pre-political career, but is useful for describing his early leadership aptitudes.

Ferns and Ostry's account is among a number of highly acclaimed accounts of King's life written before the release of King's historical papers (e.g. Hutchison, 1952 [2011]), unlike Neatby's three volume work which had access to King's archive. They described King's education in law and social work at the University of Toronto and abroad at Cambridge, Harvard, and Oxford, gave him the knowledge of the industrial age that he would use in his career path through business, working with unions, and the civil service, to become the longest-serving prime minister in the British Commonwealth's history with 21 years in office. To help launch his political career, King wrote two books: *The Secret of Heroism* (1918) and *Industry and Humanity* (1918) that engaged with such topics as socialism and how to create a stable industrial state; he had already defended a

PhD dissertation at Harvard in 1909 on Oriental immigration to Canada (at the age of 34, the same year he entered into Federal politics), based in part on his work as Ontario's Deputy Minister of Labour.

Laurier would mentor him to take over the Liberal party, but already King had his own personal vision for the country documented in his books that he would use as a guide in Canada's industrial development. Until his taking power, Fern and Ostry described King as someone who stayed away from being the focus of attention on controversial issues, and who knew the right people, but stayed away from committing to any final resolution until required by duty or following Laurier's lead when asked. These noncommittal tactics helped him lead the first minority government that required him to balance the pressure from his industrialist supporters in the Toronto and Montreal, who required higher tariffs for trade with the U.S., with the loose coalition of prairie Progressives whose wish was for lower tariffs.

The times were highly volatile after WWI, when King became the candidate of "conciliation" in terms of both regional differences about tariffs and healing the wounds of conscription formed under the previous Borden Union Government (Ferns & Ostry, 1976, p. 335). Ferns and Ostry described King's leadership bid in 1919 as follows, "King did not appear before the people as a mouthpiece of the professional officers and war profiteers. Instead, he uttered a cry against war and waste on behalf of Industry and Humanity. He appealed to man's better self, and he won first the leadership of the Liberal party and finally power" (p. 335). The Liberal party was in disarray as King took leadership and still recovering from the Unionist government split under Borden.

Duffy (2002) described King's volatile fights with Conservative opposition leader Arthur Meighen in the 1920s after the great Victorian two-party system in Canada had come to an end with the Unionist government. The Manitoban Meighen had pushed conscription through as Borden's Minister of the Interior, and he was selected as Borden's replacement to lead the post-war reconstituted Tory party when Borden retired on July 1, 1920 (Duffy, 2002, p. 104). Despite having little support in Quebec, Meighen attempted to reconstruct a representative regional Cabinet, taking time to measure the Canadian political climate for Tory support, and chose to hold onto power for a year before calling an election.

After the Winnipeg general strike of 1919 and a lost by-election in Medicine Hat, the Conservative party members knew that their fortunes would most likely not survive the winter because the economic situation that the government was blamed for did not look to improve (Graham, 1963, p. 112). Meighen called an earlier election and ran under "The Conservative and Liberal Party" banner (or frame) in an attempt to represent the remaining Unionist members of the Liberal party (and attract Liberal voters). He changed the party name back to the Conservatives shortly after the dismal election that saw him lose his own seat.

The 14th Parliament was King's first as Prime Minister, and the first minority government in Canada's history. The most common election and agenda-setting play Duffy identified prior to his King's campaign was the "Double Tribal Whipsaw", where the opposition leader framed the incumbent moderate Prime Minister as bad for either English or French Canada in some aspect, appealing to tribal fears about religion or race, thereby sawing support for moderates like Laurier or King in half in terms of possible

electoral support from across the country (Duffy, 2002, p. 66). The tactic was used unsuccessfully by the loyalist Conservatives like Meighen, Tupper, and Bowell, who attempted to follow the originator of the play, Macdonald. Meighen was notably viewed as an unapologetic enemy of French Quebec for supporting conscription, and had no support in the province to use this play successfully.

King's was among the first to use the tactic of the "Quebec Bridge" by gaining support for his first minority government mainly from Quebec (Duffy, 2002, p. 154). King's case for leadership was made on the fact that he supported the previous Liberal party leader Wilfrid Laurier's move not to force conscription. This decision helped to frame unilingual King as a supporter of Quebec in his bid for leadership, so the Liberal party's main support in the election similarly came from Quebec (Duffy, 2002, p. 105). He was also viewed favourably in parts of English Canada for being integrated into the Toronto industrialists' networks. He was, therefore, able to attract support from both key areas of the country during the election.

King ran on a vague platform of national unity targeting Liberal support in Quebec, while Meighen touted a "Canada first" approach to the Conservatives' mainly Atlantic and Ontarian supporters. The 1921 election saw the Liberals one seat shy of a majority with 116 seats, the Progressives 69 seats, the Tories 50, and independents with 5; taken together the results represented a newly changing electorate. The ensuing minority situation was a hangover from the bitter split in the country over conscription.

King's minority government was won without "a clear cut issue" because the Canadian electorate had changed after the war (Morton, 1967, p. 237). Roughly 45% of Canadians were now living in an urban environments where more cars were being driven

on the roads, and in 1919, women had gained the right to vote nationally (Duffy, 2002, p. 110). These changing dynamics affected the 1920s elections by having 11% to 20% of undecided popular voters being able to swing the results; this number had changed from about 5% in previous years during the two-party reign.

Under his national unity banner, King was elected on three reactively framed "limp themes" (Duffy, 2002, p. 105): (i) to boost the near-depression era economy, (ii) to retrench a stable government after the war (a promised return to the "normalcy" of a Liberal majority), and (iii) to reform social and labour policies for the new industrial economy. This weak mandate allowed King's first parliament to float along from one confidence vote to the next, only surviving with support from the newly developed and short-lived Progressive party that represented a loose unstable mix of mostly Western farmers' interests. King avoided confidence votes by tailoring policy to represent his three soft frames to his needs, designed to build enough support from the "lapsed Liberals" as he framed the Liberal-leaning Progressives (Duffy, 2002, p. 109).

Hutchison described King similarly to the other accounts, but he also noted that the early volatile years in minority government power would later change King because of Meighen's attacks. He first described King as being good-natured and open in the House:

> While the Conservative leader spent the next four years in introspection, inquisition, and destruction, King from the beginning adopted the role of a friendly and judicial Polonius. Meighen's approach was acid, corrosive, and elegant—the withering interjection, the ironic side, and the upright figure of ice. King was all sweet reasonableness and round, cherubic good will. Thus, as politics became largely a personal trial of strength between two men, the race of the tortoise and hare entered what was to be its decisive lap. (Hutchison, 1952 [2011], p. 68)

Hutchison's account depicted King as representing a conciliator, using consensus-based leadership as a strategic frame to attract Canadians who were seeking stability from the war and depression era, rather than the detached elitism of Meighen. He summed King's limited framing success in his first election as, "The Liberal party, in a word, offered the only people's government. The Conservatives offered the dictatorship of money, the Progressives a government by a single class" (Hutchison, 1952 [2011], p. 64).

Despite being the third largest party in the House, Meighen went after King ruthlessly for being so willing to make compromises. Hutchison described that these battles took their toll on King, and eventually shaped a new mature leader:

> The details of Meighen's maneuvers to drive a wedge between the Progressives and the Liberals, his attack on the Government for failing to reduce tariffs as it had promised and then for damaging industry by reducing them too far, the many nonconfidence votes, amendments, and subamendments, and the usual thrusts of an Opposition feeling out a Government's strengths are too lengthy to be told here. Through them, however, the mature figure of King, the Prime Minister, can be seen emerging slowly, deliberately, and irresistibly. (Hutchison, 1952 [2011], p. 69)

Many accounts have both King's principles and popular support being tested during this period because of his varied attempts to retain power at all costs, especially due to his willingness to take short term losses if it meant the government continued with the support of the Progressives. King would eventually also make agreements with J.S. Woodsworth, who as an independent at the time was beginning to articulate socialism into the Canadian context (and who would eventually help form the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation [CCF] party in 1932).

While the Conservatives have remained closed to it, the Liberal framing technique of reaching out to other parties might seem readily familiar today, but it was definitely new during King's time.

The Progressives were led by former Unionist government Minister of Agriculture Thomas Crerar, who quit the party under Borden because the budget did not address farmers' desires for free trade internationally. The party was Canada's first official third party in the House. They represented Western urban labour and framers' interests after WWI when the wheat boom collapsed, ending the perceived limitless form of agrarian prosperity that was previously touted to promote migration to the prairies (Duffy, 2002; Morton, 1967). By 1924, the Progressives were attempting to create a national party system that would contrast the two older parties based on their 69 seats in the House, but they turned down forming the official opposition in 1921 because they simply did not have the partisan infrastructure to take on the responsibility.

Morton (1967) described the Progressives as being keenly aware of their position in the minority government situation. They knew that if they supported a Conservative position on any bill, then the government would collapse, and they would be viewed to be supporting bills that were against their own interests if they took that action. After 1922, King consistently appeased Robert Forke, the new Progressive leader, who supported free market solutions when required, but King strategically did not appease the dubbed "Ginger Group" of mostly Albertan Progressives who supported a state-led regulated market solution. The Ginger Group, of which J.S. Woodsworth was a member, would eventually withdraw from the Progressive caucus because of the differences in views.

The Alberta Progressive MPs felt forced into voting for the Liberals because they knew they could not expect better from the Tories on trade and tariff policies that would protect farmers' interests. They felt this situation went against the ideals of the party which was to offer a real alternative to the old parties:

> The Manitoban Progressives could not, on tariff matters at least, regard the two old parties as identical, and, once the Liberals had made substantial concessions, were bound to support them. To the doctrinaire [Alberta] Progressives, however, the old parties were identical, and if the pursuit of principle involved the defeat of a government, well and good. In their opinion, the defeat of a government measure need not result in the resignation of the government. (Morton, 1967, p. 192)

The Alberta Progressives' belief that the government should not necessarily fall as the result of a failed bill was based in their staunch position that they represented their constituents alone and were elected to ensure their policies were passed, not to prop up other parties.

By the 1925 election, the depression was coming to an end and the beginning of the post war boom was being felt by farmers. The Progressive party was in splinters from the Liberals' constant courting strategy, and they were steadily being framed and labelled in the media as a "failed" party for propping up the old party system it was meant to protest and challenge. Morton described the party as at best a pack of independent candidates and no longer on the path towards a national party when the election was called.

In 1925, King decided after governing for the customary four sessions to call an election to run on his years of leading minority government successfully. He targeted Meighen's pro-business and high tariff policies. King claimed that he needed a majority government to deal with the problems facing the agrarian and industrial sectors, and he argued that only the Liberal party had demonstrated the abilities to lead the House during the volatile period (Graham, 1963, p. 327). Meighen tried to frame King's period of government as having accomplished nothing of his own mandate because of the influences of the left-leaning Progressives.

In the election, King lost his own North York seat and the Liberal ruling majority from the last minority parliament after a lack-luster campaign. King continued to govern, however, with the support of the Progressives, following the British parliamentary tradition that a prime minister must choose to resign and dissolve parliament to find a seat. The Liberals held on to 100 seats, but the Tories held the majority in the House at 115, with the Progressives retaining 22.

The situation was especially fragile because some of King's own party wanted him to step down so a new leader could replace him after the loss. Shortly into his second parliament a bribery scandal in the Department of Customs led to the Conservatives gaining the Progressives' support, and rather than being forced to resign King asked the Governor General Viscount Byng for another election. Byng denied King's request, as was his right, and instead offered Meighen the chance to govern following parliamentary protocols.

As follows, Granatstein and Hillmer described the "King-Byng Affair" that led to Meighen's failed prime ministerial stint due to King's framing of the decisions of Byng and Meighen as "usurping power":

> Facing defeat on a motion of censure, King went to Byng to seek a dissolution and the right to call another election. He had governed successfully for nine months, he told the governor general, and, believing he could still command a majority in Parliament, he argued that he was entitled to get what he asked for. Byng disagreed, refused King's request, and decided that Meighen must get a chance to govern. Gambling everything, King promptly resigned. There was no longer a prime minister, he told Parliament, a violation of the convention of parliamentary government that held that the nation could not be without a government. The next day, Meighen took office. But, using trickery and brilliant argumentation, the determined King forced a vote of confidence and won by one vote. Meighen quickly received the dissolution Byng had earlier refused King. (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p. 90)

The following election campaign differentiated the two leaders among the minds of the Canadian public that struggled to understand the constitutional argument. King framed Byng's decision as a power grab and "interfering with the will of the people" (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p. 81). He argued that an appointed British lord was making decisions for the people and determining Canada's future. Meighen countered that Byng's decision was correct, and instead Liberal corruption and incompetence were what mattered in the election.

With 22 seats after the 1925 election, the weakened Progressives realized they actually had even more power under the new fragile minority government because of the Liberals' need for support. The Alberta Progressives, however, still followed their principles that it was not their responsibility to support either party if doing so would be in conflict with their political beliefs. They were the specific faction that led to King's decision to dissolve government, because they would not support the tarnished Liberals' customs scandal and the specific policy of nationalizing Alberta's natural resources (Morton, 1967, p. 254).

As a counter frame, King's reason for dissolving the government stated that the Liberal-Progressive agreement had been based on "honourable co-operation" not "bargain and barter"; he felt the government could not go on democratically once the relationship switched to the latter (Morton, 1967, p. 255). For similar reasons of principle, the Progressives would also not support Meighen's government, arguing that the Governor-General's refusal to grant King dissolution "was unconstitutional and calculated to restore Canada to a purely colonial status" (Morton, 1967, p. 256)—in essence, they supported King's frame.

The Alberta Progressives argued that they were elected to represent their legislative programme as long as it could be carried forth, not the other parties' agendas; however, King's strategy worked to functionally destroy their party and the Conservatives' majority simultaneously in the next election. King received a Liberal majority coming out from the dispute, and was viewed as a decisive leader henceforth. The election led to the Liberals' reign for 22 of the next 25 years.

In other words, King set the agenda by understanding the political culture in the country, and framing his message accordingly to attract supporters. Neatby's work (1963) perhaps provided the most detailed accounts of the dispute. He described the intense daily balancing act that the parties endured during the period:

> It was five o'clock on Saturday morning when the House adjourned. The Customs report had then been discussed for four days and nights; the debate on the last day had gone on for thirteen hours. The government had been at bay and the usual parliamentary amenities had been discarded. Votes had been more important than individuals. One Liberal had been refused a pair although his wife had died; he left the corpse, returned to Ottawa to vote, and went back for the burial. A Conservative was forced to stay although his sister had died; he had the funeral postponed and registered his vote. (Neatby, 1963, p. 143)

Neatby also stated that King kept meticulous daily updated notes of potential policies that could be used to slow opposition votes, strategies to use in the event of any possible outcomes, and of the MPs who supported the government on each issue before the House. Many of these strategies can be read into the contemporary minority government era, and will be in the coming chapters.

King's wearing down of the Progressive party is a prominent example of his developing leadership acumen. By the 1925 election, the Progressives did not have enough funds to mount another campaign so quickly after their last run, and many

Canadians blamed them for the snap election. As a result, a Liberal majority was returned, in part based on the party's weakened state, but also because a reinvigorated King campaign exhaustively to attract voters; he notably lost weight from this intense period of governing, and he appeared to be a changed man to Canadians in the newspaper pictures and film newsreels (Duffy, 2002, p. 145). The Progressive party would eventually fracture after the election, with the largest group of remaining representatives realigning with the Liberal party, but during the 1920s, the third party represented the developing interests of class politics that would eventually bring about the conditions for a later link between labour groups and farmers in the early CCF (then later in its change to the NDP).

Bruce Hutchison's *Mr. Prime Minister, 1867-1964* (1964) provided further insight into the King-Byng affair and the strategy behind King's framing of Byng and Meighen. Hutchison's account tells of how Meighen and his trusted advisor former Prime Minister Borden were already aware of King's trap. They were even informed by a Clerk of the Commons and several advisors of the situation at the time, but the advice was unnecessary because they already had figured out their strategy. Meighen argued that the Crown "would be humiliated and that, to a loyal British subject, was unthinkable" (Hutchison, 1964, p. 225). He felt a responsibility to defend the Crown by accepting the position, and he felt loyalist Canadians would support his position (Graham, 1965; Hutchison, 1964).

In *Right Honourable Men* (1994), Michael Bliss's account foreshadowed the type of courtly announcements that theorists like Savoie have identified in today's executive, but in a different way from the historical accounts above. Particularly, Bliss described the

battles of Meighen and King in the 1920s as a precursor to the type of challenges the Tories faced in the 1990s that led to their party's demise when it lost its grassroots base:

> Anticipating the Tory mentality that finally killed the party in the 1990s, Meighen could not understand the need of reform. His ideas of governing was to govern, and let the people judge, later, how well you had done. None of the Progressives' populist proposals for extending democracy were of the slightest interest to the Conservative party during his leadership. Mackenzie King, on the other hand, who held power in a minority situation after 1921, knew the precariousness of his situation and often revised his policies after hearing opinion in the House of Commons. Meighen condemned King for running a "guess-work government" that trimmed its policies to court support from elected MPs. (Bliss, 1994, p. 104)

Like Granatstein and Hillmer, Bliss also described how the Byng-King affair offered an early example of framing the opposition leader in how King used the affair to his advantage in gaining popular support. Bliss observed that:

> In the election that followed, King alleged that Lord Byng's behavior had been constitutionally wrong. It was probably not. The real mistake had been Meighen's miscalculation in thinking he could carry on government for more than a few hours. The leader with an honours degree in mathematics was unable to make a reliable count of the sympathies of the members of Parliament. (Bliss, 1994, p. 105)

Historians have noted that King insightfully had written in his diary, prior to the event even occurring, the very anti-loyalist strategy that he would use if Meighen was ever asked to form a minority government.

In terms of the media campaign at the time, newspapers and movie newsreels in the 1920s were still the key to creating a national voice for representing each party's agendas. Duffy described how newspapers were used during the early modern era:

> A newspaper served each community, and almost every newspaper was either Conservative or Liberal. Government patronage was intimately involved in the business of running a paper. In addition to carrying lucrative government advertising, many papers' presses thrived on government printing contracts. In return, the papers functioned as party house organs at all times. (Duffy, 2002, p.

78)

The fortunes of newspapers rose and fell like that of the political parties', and they could also, therefore, be bought outright by a well-financed party machine. Until the era of television, the newspapers were extensions of the party campaign to construct the view of a "great" leader over that of the opposition.

Allen (2009) described how radio challenged the Canadian press and newspapers to rethink their competition model. In the U.S. a media war occurred because newspapers felt threatened by the new radio medium that could transmit news faster and to farther distances. Canada was different though in that it was more a "civil war" between newspaper owners as they came to understand how to control news and information being used by the radio.

AM radio was officially invented by Canadian Reginal Fessenden, on May 20, 1920, with experimental broadcasts starting earlier on December 1, 1919. The earliest radio listeners in Canada during the 1920s tuned into the variety of American shows that developed far more quickly than Canada's market. Radio was a local and regional medium in the 1920s, more suited to amplifying the speeches of federal politicians as they toured local areas, because no national radio service was in existence until 1932, when the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Corporation was created as an act of parliament. To solve the radio threat to newspapers in Canada, the CRBC provided protection to the Canadian Press in particular, by ensuring that its news was used on the radio.

Ward's review of radio described the use of radio for political purposes during this time as follows:

> […] during the 1920s the federal leaders of Canadian political parties preferred to cling to traditional campaign methods. They "seemed to be most comfortable

> addressing public meetings" and treated radio merely as a means of broadening the audience who could listen to their speeches. They were slow to understand that traditional oratory was far less suited to radio than the conversational approach adopted by the US president Roosevelt in his "fire-side chats". Even when the Liberals and Tories turned to radio in the 1930 federal campaign as a "principal technique" for wooing voters, R.B. Bennett and Mackenzie King each stuck to making traditional speeches which were broadcast live. (Ward, 1999, p. 320)

It notably took a coordinated network of 23 stations to celebrate the 16th anniversary of Confederation in 1927, just after King had won his majority; it was a technological feat requiring 419,000 miles of telephone and telegraph cables, as the strongest transmitter only reached 1,900 kilometres; therefore, radio was necessarily a local medium.

In the 1930s, political parties began using serialized propaganda on the radio to develop party support, but prior to that it was a medium of live-to-air broadcast, since programs could not be recorded at the time. As the Confederation event would later demonstrate, King was definitely viewed as the more technologically savvy of the two leadership contenders in the 1920s. He believed the medium could one day be used to construct a national identity, and his majority government's support for the CRBC was the realization of this vision.

King was described as very concerned with how he came across on radio, and was noted to practicing his speeches diligently for his radio addresses, so as to be prepared for the live-to-air format (Duffy, 2002; Ward, 1999). He came across as stately and fatherly by some accounts (Duffy, 2002), while lacking charisma and stilted to others (English & Stubbs, 1977). In contrast, others have noted how newspaper caricatures and editorials painted Meighen as an elitist with a voice that grated on the ears and an overall demeanour of contempt for the common person (Duffy, 2002, p. 145). Similarly,

Meighen also came across in his early radio addresses and speeches as a distant and cold figure.

All accounts point out that King outmaneuvered Meighen through a keen understanding of the Canadian political climate that was pulling away from the monarchy, the use of the media to frame Byng and Meighen, and more importantly through maintaining the support of his party and the Progressive party during the crisis period.

This period is very much a bellwether for all minority governments since it. For example, a 2010 *Canadian Parliamentary Review* article on the "British and Canadian Experience with the Royal Prerogative" assessed the King-Byng affair in terms of the 2008 parliamentary crisis, again finding that neither Byng, nor Michaëlle Jean in 2008, did anything wrong or outside of convention in the position of Governor General (Jean's decisions are discussed more in chapter nine). It argued that King's framing of Byng as a loyalist eventually led to Canada's independence: "Mackenzie King subsequently used the issue to vilify Byng, an otherwise popular Governor General, in the next election and, once re-elected, leverage this issue to force the British to surrender political authority over colonial governors and get the British Parliament to pass the *Statute of Westminster* effectively granting Canada independence" (Hicks, 2010, p. 22).

King would lead Liberal Canada from a time when the nation of 5 million was known as a British colony around the world, through to the end of the Second World War when it became an admired nation of 12 million people, and he then smoothly transitioned his office to Louis St. Laurent in 1948's postwar prosperity.

Many accounts of King's leadership note his party's respect for his intellect and unquestioned passion for political leadership (Ferns & Ostry, 1976; Neatby, 1958). Like Granatstein and Hillmer's number one ranking for King among prime ministers, Hutchison described how after the 1926 election King "constructed a Government which, under two leaders, would last for twenty-two years. No greater ministry has ever governed Canada. None that followed has equaled its achievements" (Hutchison, 1964, p. 257). In this period, Mackenzie King's leadership style after his first two minority governments could best be categorized as a "prime minister-centred cabinet"—he called the shots that guided the party and the country's future, and brokered power on a case-by-case basis with the Progressive party. Duffy noted how King's Cabinet support in Quebec also allowed him to build a unique bridge across the country to gain his majority, which has since become a common play for political success (Duffy, 2002, p. 155).

During his first minority governments, King was still learning to lead and govern while also rebuilding the Liberal party after some of Laurier's English-Canadian members had joined the Unionist party to support conscription during the First World War. Under his leadership, he notably appointed his Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe to reorganize Liberal political support in Quebec, and he also had the future first-Canadian born Governor General Vincent Massey as an exceptional minister of no particular portfolio (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999). In other words, King relied on his Cabinet ministers for advice and support. It was a time when his office consisted of less than a handful of administrative secretaries, and therefore, the Cabinet was required for political strategies, which included communicating consistently with Progressive party leaders during the 1920s. The PMO did not officially exist as it is known today until the late

1930s under King's man Jack Pickersgill. While balancing minority government, King also left the door open to lapsed Liberals from the former Unionist party and the Progressive party to return. His conciliatory ways rebuilt the Liberal party for years to come.

From this review, King's successful uses of the levers of power can be summarized in terms of (i) King's decision making and leadership skills on framing and setting the agenda on the trade tariff issue in 1921 and the Lord Byng affair in 1926, (ii) the support of his Cabinet through a volatile period that helped to rebuild the Liberal party using the Quebec bridge, and (iii) his understanding of the balance of power in the House, which ultimately helped him to destroy the Progressive party and construct a majority at the Meighen Conservatives' expense. Lastly, King's uses of media strategies through newspapers and radio at the time were not noted to be knockout punches to his opposition, but he still presented a more persuasive popular leadership image to the electorate as compared to Meighen's cold elitism.

**Summary: Mackenzie King's Tenure in Minority Government**
**First Minority:** March 8, 1922 to September 5, 1925
**Second Minority:** January 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926

1. The platform and dominant agenda when the PM was elected:

   King's two election platforms were both rather weakly defined. His first focused on reforming social and labour policies for the industrial age, and boosting the economy to deal with the post-WWI depression. His agenda included lowering taxes and helping urban planning. His second agenda mainly focused on his ability to govern during the minority period and his support for a common-sense trade tariff to help farmers. From these examples, it could be argued that the nebulous agendas may have been part of the reason King found himself in minority situations early in his career. Others might argue that his conciliatory agendas were required attempts to attract the largest number of voters using populist overtures.

2. The minority situation (e.g. fragile, super fragile, impossible?):

   King's first minority was shy of a majority by one seat and consistently back by the Progressives, but could still be considered fragile because it was Canada's first foray into minority government. The second minority was super fragile because the Conservatives held a majority and King had lost his own seat, with some of his party wanting him to step down as leader.

3. The main agenda change during the mandate (the party policy):

   King had to balance the Progressive party's demands to support farmers, alongside English-Canada's concerns about the economy and Quebec's mistrust of the Conservatives from the wartime practice of conscription and their high tariff, pro-business policies.

4. The role of the PM during any changes (the frame):

   King's first frame was one of conciliation among classes and regions in Canada at a time when conscription and the depression were dividing Canadians. As an unproven leader, this frame led to limited success in his first election and Canada's first minority government. King's big success came in 1925 when he framed Meighen as representing a loyalist British tradition in the Governor General's decision to allow Meighen to govern. King's frame therefore represented the interests of an independent Canadian dominion. The crisis led to the Governor General position being clarified a few years later as representing the Crown, and not the British government.

5. How did the minority collapse (Did the government pull its own trigger or did the opposition? What does this say about who controlled the agenda and its limits?):

   King's first parliament ended when he called an election after governing for four years in an attempt to frame his leadership skills in government during the unstable period. His second parliament ended with the King-Byng Affair that saw Meighen gain power for Canada's shortest parliament.

**Conclusion: Early Modern Minority Government in Review**

Functionally, King's experiences demonstrate three tools for how he kept Canada's first two minority governments functioning, following Dobell (2000) and Russell's (2008) analyses of minority government's key factors for success: (i) through his leadership style that allowed for changing his mind on policy issues depending on the political climate, and framing issues to gain popular support for his policies, (ii) by building Cabinet support in key areas of the country, thereby helping to rebuild the Liberal party, and (iii) by leaning on or partnering with other political parties or select MPs whose interests aligned with each policy before the House. In his first minority, King worked with the Progressive party to maintain power, balancing partisan interests on the dominant issue of trade tariffs with the U.S. He was able to frame the issue to attract enough market-oriented Progressive members to support the government, thereby avoiding confidence votes, and demonstrating that he was the leader of conciliation who could work well with others.

While his abilities to shift positions helped him to maintain power, the frame did not work to create a majority in the following election that saw him lose his own seat and reduced the Liberals' seats below that of the Conservatives, as Meighen painted him as unable to fulfill his agenda. King turned his fortunes around during the Byng affair, especially in comparison to the Meighen Conservative government strategy of "going it alone" as Loyalists to the Governor General during that time period. King framed Byng's use of power as undemocratic, though it was not, and captured popular support by building off of Canadian's post-WWI wave for sovereignty from the United Kingdom. The decisive action helped him to build his first majority.

Overall, the issue/frame analysis method was demonstrated to emphasize its practical uses for identifying the important agenda issues that mattered to maintain power during minority governments. This method will be used in the following chapters to demonstrate how each minority government prime minister controlled his agenda, and how technology played a role in agenda setting strategies.

The King period obviously did not have to deal with the 24 hour, seven days a week, news cycle of the Internet age, but King did lead the way in adapting his style to control his newspaper image and speeches that were conveyed from the local radio pulpits to attract popular support in the 1920s. His fatherly statesman image contrasted with the aloof Meighen, who came across as an elitist. The modern mass media age was just beginning to take shape during this period, and King's majority government would eventually develop the national media through the CRBC that would later become today's CBC.

## Chapter Four
## Minority Government Agenda Setting and Framing in the Television Age 1957-2004

> The Harper government's spin machine is so pervasive and over-the-top, daily exposure leads to the dilemma of laughing or crying. Everything the spin machine spits out portrays Canada as a worldwide leader, at the top of something or other, or doing better than ever.
> - Jeffrey Simpson (2010)

Simpson diagnosed a common contemporary issue with partisan political communication: pervasive *spin*. In this case, Simpson explained that the Harper Conservatives' commitments to spend $16 billion on new military jets to be built outside of Canada during an economic recession was completely out of line with any Conservative party economic ideology of cost restraint, national sovereignty, and small government. The Tories' frame instead towed the party line by branding the issue in terms of "a strong national defence."

His article is one among many that has raised the question: How did political strategy evolve to the point where "communication" became such a dominant form of power and agenda control? After all, Canada is not like the U.S. where money is equal to free speech, and corporate money and lobbyists are definitely curtailed in Canada far more by federal laws in terms of their influences on political parties.

This chapter assesses how Canadian politicians successfully maneuvered in minority government settings in the age of modern mass media to frame and control their agendas. What historical changes to agenda setting have made a mark on the Canadian political landscape and did technology figure in these changes? To identify examples, Canadian political history is reviewed to explore how political communication reached its current hypermediated state.

The evidence demonstrates that the Trudeau Liberals developed the sophisticated

“war room” in the PMO during the 1970s to regain control of the agenda during that frustrating minority period. They used the developing technologies of computers and polling to segment voters by their ridings across the country to strategically reconstruct a Liberal majority.

There is little chance of understanding the complexity of the centralizing power shift in the PMO today without a review of the technology facilitated agenda-setting strategies that developed and were used in the modern era.

John Duffy’s *Fights of Our Lives* (2002) collected the most popular anecdotes of federal government changes in Canada’s modern history. His work offers a playbook for electoral campaign success based on the platforms that have led to prime ministers’ agendas once in office, and it is therefore useful for offering thorough accounts of the four modern minority government prime ministers reviewed here. The following review uses his work as a main source, along with support drawn from other histories, to reconstruct prime ministerial agenda-setting tactics. The review focuses on the four factors described in chapter two that are required to control and implement a government’s agenda: (i) the prime minister’s decision making and leadership skills, (ii) the make-up and support of their Cabinet, (iii) the power balance in the House, and (iv) the uses of new technologies to understand and frame issues in the problem, political, and policy streams (as Kingdon described agenda setting; see chapter one).

The following research questions guide the historical analysis to present the variety of tactics that have been used to maintain control of agendas during each period:

1. What was the platform and dominant agenda when the PM was elected?
2. What was the minority situation (e.g. fragile, super fragile, or impossible)?

3. How did the agenda change during the mandate (e.g. what was the official policy)?

4. What was the role of the PM during any changes (e.g. was a new frame provided)?

5. How did the minority collapse? Did the government pull its own trigger or did the opposition? What does this say about who controlled the agenda and its limits?

**I. John Diefenbaker** (September 18, 1895 – August 16, 1979)

| **Minority Government Periods:** |
|---|
| 1) October 14, 1957 to February 6, 1958 (23rd Parliament) |
| 2) September 27, 1962 to February 6, 1963 (25th Parliament) |

Among the modern post-war examples, the two minority governments of Progressive Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker did not have any key partners to accomplish the government agendas. In 1957, Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives (PCs) won a surprise election victory, holding 112 seats, with the Liberals keeping 105, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) with 25 seats, and the Social Credit party with 19 seats (Duffy, 2002, p. 210). The win was a surprise because polls prior to the election demonstrated high continued Liberal support among Canadians at roughly 48% to the Conservatives 34% (Smith, 1995, p. 235). King's successor Louis St. Laurent had a 74% approval rating (Duffy, 2002, p. 194). Laurent was so confident in success that he did not even bother to fill 16 vacant senate seats before the election.

Diefenbaker's team skilfully used television to present an alternative vision of a "United Canada" as a response to a continuation of the Liberal reign started by King. Duffy described this framing strategy as a "populist rush" that "mobilized voters who who don't generally like Ottawa and so are opposed to whatever government happens to be in office" (Duffy, 2002, p. 229). The emergence of a "highly alienated western

Canada" allowed for Diefenbaker to champion the dissatisfaction on the hustings.

During the campaign, St. Laurent avoided using television in favour of meeting people in person, and his over-confident strategy spelled the beginning of the end for Liberal dominance in the House as the successful use of the medium was just starting to be understood by Diefenbaker and his advisors (Duffy, 2002; Granatstein, 1986; Smith, 1995). Diefenbaker delivered the new Tory "Vision" in the 1958 platform to "often electrifying" responses from Canadians. The "Vision" touted a Canada that would refine and use its own resources at home to one day support a country of 200 million people connected by roads his government would help pave.

Tory minister Pierre Sévigny stated he saw many people "kneel and kiss his [Deifenbaker's] coat" during that period (Bliss, 1994, p. 191). Canadians once again had a leader, "a chief," which was a clear option that differentiated the Tories from the "do-nothing" Liberals, as they were framed by the Tories.

Diefenbaker ran on a platform that focused on domestic changes and reforms, including infrastructure and agricultural policies to help farmers' incomes. His enthusiastic "Vision" and tireless campaigning was accepted by many Canadians in contrast to Laurent's "quiet" campaign (Duffy, 2002, p. 202). The Liberals would spend $6-10 million on the campaign, or between $40 and 70 million by today's rates, while the Tories would modestly spend $3-3.5 million, or $21-25 million currently (Duffy, 2002, p. 202). The use of television paid off with Diefenbaker appearing dynamic, while avoiding talk of any past disliked PC leaders and policies. Diefenbaker's ads appeared exciting and new, especially because Laurent appeared leaden and old in his televised spots.

Historians Cook and Belanger (2007) recount the following list of

accomplishments of the first Diefenbaker minority government from October, 1957 to February, 1958:

> the new government proceeded boldly with an ambitious legislative program of farm price supports, housing loans, aid for development projects across the country, tax reductions, and increases in old-age pensions and civil service salaries. Public opinion polls showed strong support for the new government. When the Liberal leader, Lester Bowles Pearson, moved a motion of non-confidence proposing the Conservatives hand power back to the Liberals, Diefenbaker seized the occasion to request a dissolution of parliament for an election in March 1958. (Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 370)

Notably, Diefenbaker took the early opportunity to paint the new Liberal leader's request in the House as naïve, entitled, and completely out of touch with the gloomy economic reality, a downturn that he argued the Liberals had kept secret from the Canadian people, which he demonstrated through government documents with Laurent's own comments forecasting it.

Diefenbaker called the election, running on his leadership record; his first minority government would lead to the largest electoral victory in Canadian history, winning 208 out of 265 seats in 1958.

In terms of modern electioneering, Bliss (1994) described the effect Diefenbaker's use of "admen" and the media had in the Tory backroom strategies by the 1960s and 70s. For example, former Liberal and later CBC news man, Dalton Camp was brought in to try "to teach the Tories to be more positive, to understand the creative uses of government, to promise to outdo to the Liberals in founding programs and organizing spending that would improve people's lives" (Bliss, 1994, p. 190). During the 1958 election, Diefenbaker's media tactics were honed to contrast with Pearson's inexperience with the new medium; they consciously built off grassroots strategies Laurent had developed, but translated them for the television age.

In his first parliament, Diefenbaker did call the election on a strong record of achievement, but he did not accomplish all of his election goals. For instance, his earliest platform commitment failed to gain traction in his trade policy attempt to "divert 15 per cent of Canada's foreign trade from the United States to the United Kingdom" (Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 369). Despite his loyalist support for trade with the commonwealth, the reality of north-south trade economics could not be changed by Diefenbaker focusing on the policy stream or the political stream (using Kingdon's terms), because many Canadians did not view overseas trade with the Commonwealth as an issue and were not swayed by Diefenbaker's attempts to frame trade policy as colonial allegiance.

Diefenbaker's executive style has been portrayed consistently as ranging from demanding fierce loyalty from his Cabinet to at times bullying them outright (Granatstein, 1986; Newman, 1968, 1973; Smith, 1995). Only one Conservative MP had been in power before the election, carried over from the Borden years, and he was not appointed to Cabinet. Peter C. Newman observed in *Renegade in Power* (1973):

> The Cabinet that administered the nation's business during the Diefenbaker Years comprised a disparate mixture of patriotic radicals and weak-kneed reactionaries, earnest statesmen and artful dodgers. It failed to provide the Conservative regime with constructive policy leadership, not because its members lacked administrative ability or dedication of purpose, but because of the uncertain and erratic direction they received from John Diefenbaker. (p. 92)

Newman described how Diefenbaker held on average 140 Cabinet meetings a year, while the last full year of Liberal power under Laurent met 91 times. Newman stated, "Instead of surrounding himself with his intellectual peers, Diefenbaker settled for a palace guard of political cronies" (Newman, 1973, p. 97). Diefenbaker was notorious for delaying and stalling decisions until he had his entire Cabinet on side; he was framed by the Liberals as

being insecure and the Conservatives as unable to see a path forward, but the frame did not stick until his second minority government.

His first majority was stifled by an economic downturn in 1958, monetary policy battles with the Liberal-appointed Bank of Canada Governor James Coyne, and declining support in Quebec, due to his unwillingness to make concessions to Francophones. In 1960, he passed the Canadian Bill of Rights and also extended voting rights to all aboriginal Canadians. However, his "One Canada" agenda led to battles with the newly emerging Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the economic downturn stifled his hopes for building Canada's economy. The Liberals framed the Diefenbaker government as an autocracy during the campaign, and they built targeted lists of what agenda-setting researchers would now call "faulty framing" for attacks. The election played out during a recession, recent budget deficits, and a major monetary crisis that led to the devaluation of the Canadian dollar, which Canadians blamed on the PCs.

The PCs ran on increasing support for Public Works and maintaining current fiscal policy at a time when Diefenbaker's own Finance Minister was warning of an austerity budget. Diefenbaker had been forced to announce an austerity plan in an about face when the dollar was devalued during the campaign.[9] The move was consequently judged poorly by Canadians who increasingly believed the Prime Minister's demeanour was arrogant and detached from the common person's plight. The record-setting Diefenbaker majority of 1958 was reduced to a demoralizing 116 seats (a loss of 92 seats), with the Liberals holding 100 seats, the Social Credit party holding 30, and the

[9] It is interesting to note how the Harper Conservatives faced a similar challenge with the economic downturn in 2008, but were able to successfully get out in front of the issue by their leadership on "Canada's Economic Action Plan" that the opposition parties had to support, after the Conservatives initially stumbled through the Coalition Government crisis (see chapter nine for more on this time period). In other words, Harper succeeded where Diefenbaker failed on a key economic issue.

newly formed New Democrat Party (NDP) after its evolution from the CCF led by Tommy Douglas, holding 19 seats. Diefenbaker held onto his prairie seats, but lost "in the Atlantic provinces, rural Quebec, urban Ontario, and British Columbia" (Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 376). He also lost five of his Cabinet ministers.

The second Diefenbaker minority government was the exact opposite of his first in terms of accomplishing its agenda. The government lasted from September, 1962 to February, 1963, and the Liberals continued to frame Diefenbaker as a "running a one-man government" (Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 370).

In October 1962, when the Cuban Missile Crisis hit, Diefenbaker's government was viewed (and framed by the Liberals) as directionless, and some party members openly questioned his leadership on the issue, emboldening no less than three ministers to resign cabinet. The government fell shortly afterward when the opposition united against the weakened Diefenbaker due to his demonstrated lack of decision-making skills while the government was under pressure during negotiations with U.S. President Kennedy to accept nuclear warheads to be used on Canadian Bomarc missiles. The Liberal opposition leader Pearson, who won the Nobel peace prize for his work in 1956 to solve the Suez Canal crisis, stated openly that Canada had to accept the warheads because of agreements made in 1958 (thus representing the Liberal frame). The original "peace keeper" Pearson's statements contrasted starkly with Diefenbaker's inabilities to simultaneously frame an appropriate solution, negotiate with Washington, and assuage the majority of Canadians who wished to remain a nuclear free country.

Newman described Diefenbaker's lack of party leadership on this issue as follows:

> The Cabinet Defence Committee, the body charged with recommending changes in national military policy, which had sat at least once a month under the previous Liberal government, met only seventeen times between June 21, 1957, and April 22, 1963. […] Defence expenditures declined to 26 per cent of federal spending, from an average of 41 per cent of the federal outlay in the previous six Liberal years. (Newman, 1973, p. 343)

The Liberals declared that the PCs had created a "fog of silence" on the most pressing issue of relations with the U.S. government and NATO (Newman, 1973, p. 343). The Liberal frame was adopted by the Canadian public in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and continued into the Canada-U.S. nuclear warheads debate in 1963. The Minister of National Defence Douglas Harkness resigned from Cabinet on February 4, 1963, because of Diefenbaker's opposition to accepting the missiles. Two votes of non-confidence followed on Monday, February 5, 1963, over the warhead issue, with Diefenbaker's own Cabinet split on the issue.

The fractured PC party lost in the ensuing election, but Diefenbaker remained as leader for one more election, which led to another Liberal minority, before he was removed from party leadership during the PC party convention in 1967.

**Table 13: Playbook Examples of Issue Framing in Minority Government**

| Prime Minister | Issue (first-level) | Frame (second-level) | Result |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Diefenbaker:** October 14, 1957 to February 6, 1958 | Canadian's dissatisfaction with the Liberal Ottawa status quo. | The Populist Rush: Harness feelings of dissatisfaction through providing an alternative vision to the incumbent. | **Success:** The end of the Liberals' majority reign. |
| **Diefenbaker:** September 27, 1962 to February 6, 1963 | Foreign Affairs: Nuclear warheads in Canada. | Stalling and avoiding engagement on the topic in attempt to establish Canadian sovereignty. | **Failed:** His Cabinet divided their support, which led to the loss of power and eventually his leadership when the Liberals framed it as a failure of leadership. |

**Summary: John Diefenbaker's Tenure in Minority Government**
**First Minority:** October 14, 1957 to February 6, 1958 (23rd Parliament)
**Second Minority:** September 27, 1962 to February 6, 1963 (25th Parliament)

1. The platform and dominant agenda when the PM was elected:

   Diefenbaker's first minority was framed as the "Vision" of "One Canada" focusing on commonwealth trade, domestic reforms, infrastructure, and agricultural policies to help farmers' incomes. Diefenbaker's second minority government was forced to deal with an austerity budget as the dominant agenda item.

2. The minority situation:

   His first minority was stable because the Liberal party was going through a major transition in leadership and were not well supported in the polls. His second minority situation was super fragile because the Liberals had gained ground in the election, and the economy was not favourable for implementing expensive campaign promises. The Canadian public was not content with either the Liberals or PCs holding power, which was reflected in the minority government situation. If either party was able to construct a solid enough lead in the polls over the other party, then an election would be imminent during this period.

3. The main agenda change during the mandate (the party policy):

   The PCs fulfilled most of their platform in Diefenbaker's first minority which led to their success in the following election. Diefenbaker's second minority agenda was eventually overtaken by national economic problems and international politics during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His mishandling of accepting U.S. warheads into Canada, and recalling a Canadian ambassador in protest during this period led to fractures within his own Cabinet and losing two confidence motions in the House.

4. The role of the PM during any changes (the frame):

   Near the end of his first minority, Diefenbaker made a famously deprecating speech in the House about Pearson and the Liberals' brazen grasp for power that framed the opposition as power hungry and out of touch with Canadians. It worked to help frame the Liberals during the ensuing election. Near the end of the second minority, the Liberal party successfully framed the PCs as without direction, and instead the Liberals supported accepting the nuclear warheads based on previous agreements with the U.S. and following Canada's NATO obligations, which demonstrated Pearson's leadership over that of Diefenbaker's.

5. How did the minority collapse:

   In 1958, the government called the election based on its record. Diefenbaker saw an opportunity to control his own agenda by gaining a majority given the poor early performance of the new Liberal leader and he took advantage of it immediately. His second minority ended in 1963 with two non-confidence motions that were moved by the opposition, and the PCs' agenda ultimately failed because of unforeseen international agenda items developing which usurped their own agenda.

**II. Lester B. Pearson** (23 April 1897 – 27 December 1972)

| **Minority Government Periods:** |
| --- |
| 1) May 16, 1963 to September 8, 1965 (26th Parliament) |
| 2) January 18, 1966 to April 23, 1968 (27th Parliament) |

The agenda-setting tactic of officially partnering with other political parties was used effectively during the three modern Liberal minority governments (i.e. King, Pearson, and Trudeau's respectively); no Conservatives prime ministers have officially used this tactic of creating a formal partnership with another party (Dobell, 2000; Russell, 2008). Pearson and Trudeau's partnerships obviously differed from King's in terms of the political parties with which they partnered (Dobell, 2000). Pearson's first minority government lasted from May, 1963 to September, 1965, with the help of the Social Credit party and the NDP. Pearson was elected in response to Diefenbaker's failings during the Cuban Missile Crisis, but the national mood was mixed with 129 Liberals, 95 PCs, 24 Social Credit seats, and 17 NDP members in the House (Duffy, 2002, p.236).

In terms of his leadership qualities, Hutchison described Pearson as "The Lonely Extrovert" who was a "composite portrait of every mother's son" (Hutchison, 1964, p. 350). He was a pupil of King's political style; Hutchison for example stated that the two shared a few traits, including their careful thinking process on political issues and their charisma with fellow party members: "A man advising either of them went away satisfied that his advice was accepted, only to find it disregarded in favour of an opposite course. Many men who mistook politeness for consent felt betrayed. If charm made friends for King and Pearson, it also made enemies" (Hutchison, 1964, p. 351).

A number of impressive agenda items in the areas of social policy were accomplished at the time under Pearson because of the legislative mix. Pearson campaigned on an agenda entitled "60 Days of Decision", framing the Liberal brand as

the party right for both the economy and families. They would focus on lowering income taxes, boosting wages, creating a 40 hour work week, instituting higher family allowances and student loans, introducing a new Canadian flag, creating a public pension plan, and reforming health care. The economy was strong during Pearson's tenure, which also helped to ensure Canadians' support for many of the new social and welfare programs. In 1965, Canada and the U.S. signed The Automotive Pact, and unemployment went to a 20 year low. Using Kingdon's terms, the political and policy streams combined with the problem streams in a way that helped to focus the Liberal agenda on social policy during this period because of a shift to the left with the links to the Social Credit and NDP for support in the House.

Pearson's first minority government ended because of a growing "distemper" over on-going scandals (qtd. in Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 405; Newman, 1968). Diefenbaker's PCs were facing a scandal, the Munsinger affair, in which Diefenbaker's Cabinet minister Pierre Sévigny was accused of being involved with a former Soviet spy. Views of the Liberals were also affected by a legal scandal in Quebec because of Minister of State Yvon Dupuis's connections with mafia member Lucien Rivard. Both incidents were used as House fodder, negatively affecting the party images in the minds of Canadians, at a time when Diefenbaker's leadership was already in question by his own party. The Liberals framed Pearson's record of achievement in minority government as that of a careful steward and called a snap election for November 8, 1965, following the advice of U.S. President Kennedy's loaned out political advisor, the pollster George

Gallup.[10] Gallup's work presented that a surge in Liberal support had occurred in the rest of Canada, outside of Quebec where the scandal affected Liberal support.

The pollsters' predicted majority did not emerge however; the Liberals ended up two seats shy. Pearson's second minority government followed immediately after his first in January, 1966, lasting until April, 1968, with nearly the same legislative mix: 131 Liberals, 97 PCs, 21 NDP, and 14 Social Credit seats. He offered his resignation as leader of the Liberal party after the loss, but it was denied by the party.

He had campaigned using the slogans "Good Things Happen When a Government Cares about People" and "For Continued Prosperity" to emphasize the Liberals' push to complete work on reforming federal pensions and medical insurance. The support of the NDP helped lead to the creation of the Canada and Quebec Pension plans (1966), the Canada Assistance Plan (1966), the Canadian Medicare Act (1966), the Guaranteed Income Supplement (1967), the Immigration Board (1967), more support for university research and capital expenditures, and the end of the now famous fight for a new Canadian flag design (Cook & Belanger, 2007, pp. 404-405). Early on, Pearson focused on new symmetrical agreements to refine Canada's Medicare plan, supporting vocational training, and making the public service bilingual (Ryan, 1999, p. 88); the agreements stirred up inter-provincial competition again and a return to executive federalism by Pearson was used to control the regional backlash, despite his noted consensus-based background in diplomacy.

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[10] Adams's "Polling in Canada: Calling the Elections" (2010), in Sampert and Trimble's *Mediating Canadian Politics*, provides a good overview of the evolution of polling in Canada. George Gallup's work began in 1935 in the U.S. One of the first uses of polling in Canada was a study he led on the conscription issue during WWII, but the poll was suppressed because of the division across the country. Polls were mainly only used in preparation for elections because of the exorbitant costs; in the 1950s, the Liberals billings were in the range of $1.5 million to $2 million, in the days before computers and robo-dialing call centers. The frequency of polling would change in the 1970s under Trudeau's PMO and the development of the "war room" (see below).

Like Diefenbaker's, Pearson's second term would face some international challenges. In 1967, Pearson dealt with French President Charles de Gaulle's controversial treatment of Quebec diplomats being more favourably accepted on a state visit as compared to that of Canadian ambassadors. The favouritism prompted an invitation to de Gaulle for a state visit to Canada so that Pearson could personally address the matter. De Gaulle's visit started in Quebec City, and ended shortly thereafter with his divisive statement "Vivre le Québec libre!" leading to the end of the diplomatic visit (Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 408).

Despite the international incident, Pearson struggled to keep the promises on which he campaigned during his second term because of dealing with the opposition minority partners, but his successful creation of social policies outweighed these issues for many Canadians, so he did not have the same electoral backlash to the extent of Diefenbaker's failed second term agenda. Instead, Pearson's views towards retirement were widely known within the party, so his eventual leadership transition and successful social policies helped to pave the way to the Trudeau years, at a time when both the Liberals and the PCs chose new leadership. Trudeau had been elected to the House in 1965, and was quickly taken into Pearson's fold due to his exceptional skills as Minister of Justice and Pearson's need to replace his weakening Quebec contingent of Cabinet ministers lost in the previous election and through scandals.

During his tenure as Prime Minister, Pearson's executive style with his Cabinet was described as more consensus-based than Diefenbaker's autocratic method of not making a decision until his Cabinet ministers agreed with his view; some of Pearson's ministers even said he was a pushover who could be convinced of anything with enough

effort (Newman, 1968). Newman described Pearson's government as being challenged constantly by Diefenbaker's Tories and being embarrassed during House debates on a few occasions because of the unstable nature of both his agenda and the political climate supported by the NDP. Others felt that Pearson's leadership style was based on listening to all points of view before making a final decision after hard work and careful deliberation (Granatstein, 1986); these skills had served him well in creating Canada's diplomatic role on the world stage during the Suez Canal crisis and the nuclear warhead issue with the U.S. that led to Diefenbaker's fall from power.

Pearson was also said to have a knack for recognizing the abilities of others in his Cabinet; three future prime ministers, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, John Turner, and Jean Chrétien, were all members of his 1965 Cabinet. However, he also lost four Cabinet ministers to scandal, with his Minister of State Yvon Dupuis becoming the first Cabinet member in Canadian history to resign under criminal charges for bribery (which were later dropped). Despite never gaining a majority government, many Canadians were saddened by Pearson's announcement of retirement on December 14, 1967:

> Prime Minister Pearson was seventy, his health was becoming precarious, and the government he led, all too obviously mirroring the uncertainties of the 1960s, racked with divisions and plagued by leaks and scandals, often seemed to be rudderless. Even so, when Pearson told a press conference on December 14, 1967, that he was going to retire, there was a sense of loss. The Prime Minister had been a fixture on the Ottawa scene since the end of the 1920s as a bureaucrat, a senior official, a Cabinet minister, Leader of the Opposition, and chief executive; there was no one in public life with his experience. (Granatstein, 1986, p. 305)

In 1967, Pearson had led the Liberals and the country through very uncertain times of the developing Cold War. Following the advice of friend Marc Lalonde and a group of Toronto academics, he supported the nomination of his Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau

for the leadership of the Liberal party; many felt Trudeau embodied the spirit and excitement of Montreal's Expo '67 and the country's centennial, which Pearson oversaw before retiring.

Pearson Policy Secretary Thomas Kent provided examples in his memoirs, *A Public Purpose* (1988), of how political communication changed at this time in Canada. Kent was one of the first to document the role of someone working in the early PMO, and was therefore one of the earliest Canadian spin doctors. In particular, Kent noted the effect that the new technology of television had on Pearson's early campaigns in federal politics as the new Liberal leader:

> Skilled professional coaching produced only slight improvement in his performance on television and his speaking style remained, from most platforms, ineffective. All too often the reaction of some listeners to his speeches, as well as many viewers of television, was doubt whether he meant what he said. That showed up clearly in the opinion surveys. Ironically, it was Mr. Diefenbaker, the actor-orator, whose sincerity was much more accepted by the public. I attributed much of the blame to training in a diplomatic world where a clear, blunt statement of intentions was regarded as amateurish and ineffective, not to say uncouth. (Kent, 1988, p. 127)

Television was a game changer, and it was something many print journalists and political strategists like Kent worked to understand in order to frame policy communications successfully for the public and to train their leaders in order to effectively sway public opinion. For many politicos, its importance was clear when Kennedy famously used television to beat out Richard Nixon in the U.S. election campaign in 1960. Nixon visibly sweated on television and looked nervous which voters found untrustworthy, whereas Kennedy came across as a confident, charismatic personality.

During the same period in the Canadian context, Kent found that television did not immediately trump newspaper's opinion columns and editorials. Kent argued that

newspapers still could influence policy, especially during election campaigns, because the articles became more sensational to compete with the images of television; in effect, each medium affected the other (Kent, 1988, p. 6). Kent saw the in-depth newspaper articles of the time as affecting changes in politics because they communicated to party leaders good policy options, which were still the dominant keys to control a government's agenda while in power, rather than today's sound bite multi-channel television media framing and the savvy communication strategies that can overwhelm the public imagination or lead to a distracted apathetic public.

In another example, Kent described his decision to get into the political game, which occurred at a wedding attended by young Liberals; the following anecdote presents the power of print media at the time. Kent was a journalist with *The Winnipeg Free Press* prior to entering politics, and his experience in the media influenced how he saw politicians were able to use the evolving media groups in the country:

> I was partly responsible for the defeat of the St. Laurent government, they said, and the same thing was going to happen to the Manitoba provincial government, for the same reasons. I objected that they were inventing a scapegoat: the voters defeated governments, and the most that any commentator did was to articulate the feelings and views that were at work among marginal voters. All right: their interest wasn't in blame anyway, and they admitted that much of the criticism of the government had been valid. But I must admit that criticism was an easy game and what mattered now was the future. The Liberal party was in disarray, more hurt and disorganized than I knew. Its survival might be in question. Having articulated the criticism, it was up to me to help to articulate what should be done now. (Kent, 1988, p. 45)

Kent's descriptions above fit more of the modernist notion of the political leader as a "great man" with a vision that must be communicated through individual media for the masses to be led appropriately. His descriptions do not match that of the fragmented network environment today, where voters are split among multiple parties and issue

networks in their choices and influences.

Indeed, Kent's assessment for describing why he supported Pearson as the next Prime Minister was based on what can best be called protean framing and agenda-setting tactics, where he believed that then leadership contender Paul Martin Sr.'s traditional style would not help with the quick renewal of the Liberal party if he was chosen over someone, like Pearson, with whom fewer Canadians were familiar, and who could be molded into something that Canadians desired (Kent, 1988, p. 48). In this way, Kent pursued change by framing Mike Pearson as "new".

**Table 13: Playbook Examples of Issue Framing in Minority Government**

| Prime Minister | Issue (first-level) | Frame (second-level) | Result |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pearson:** May 16, 1963 to September 8, 1965 | Partnering with the NDP and Social Credit party. | Successful leadership through a difficult minority period. | **Success:** Moderate in that it ended the PC's reign, but led to another minority. |
| **Pearson:** January 18, 1966 to April 23, 1968 | Leadership renewal. | Chose the youthful, smart Quebecker Trudeau to frame the party's direction. | **Success:** Led to the first Trudeau majority. |

**Summary: Lester B. Pearson**
**First Minority:** May 16, 1963 to September 8, 1965 (26th Parliament)
**Second Minority:** January 18, 1966 to April 23, 1968 (27th Parliament)

**1.** The platform and dominant agenda when the PM was elected:

In 1963, Pearson ran on a platform called "60 Days of Decision" that included reforms to labour laws, old age pension and medical insurance. The NDP under Tommy Douglas supported wholesale universal Medicare, and the PCs did not even have medical reforms on their radar (Granatstein, 1986, p. 193). Before his second minority, Pearson campaigned on the successes of his previous agenda, under the slogans "Good Things Happen When a Government Cares about People" and "For Continued Prosperity".

**2.** The minority situation:

For his first minority, Liberal support was strong across the country given Canadians' dissatisfaction with Diefenbaker's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis, but Pearson required the support the Social Credit and NDP to maintain support in the House. In 1966, the situation was still fragile, but more stable as compared to the previous parliament because the Liberals did gain seats in the election, even though they actually lost popular support across Canada, despite Gallup's predictions of a Liberal majority.

**3.** The main agenda change during the mandate (the party policy):

In both of Pearson's minority governments, the agendas leaned more to the left because of the link with the Social Credit and NDP. After dealing with pension reform in his first parliament, the Pearson Liberals switched to focusing on universal Medicare. This decision was influenced by several factors including the NDP's support, the good economy, and a report released by the Chief Justice of Saskatchewan, Emmett Hall, which espoused the benefits of Saskatchewan's new system and the ideas of "universal" care (Granatstein, 1986, p. 194). His second minority would also be framed through the change of Liberal leadership that would solidify support behind Trudeau.

**4.** The role of the PM during any changes (the frame):

In 1965, Pearson took the advice of party elite and pollsters to call a snap election as soon as a majority was within his sights during his first minority. In 1968, Pearson selected his Cabinet member Trudeau as the next Liberal party leader, passing the baton to a leader framed as young and exciting, representing a new Canada.

**5.** How did the minority collapse:

In 1965, the government called the election to attempt to gain a majority. In the latter case, the government called an election based on the "Trudeaumania" love affair Canadians had with the charismatic, intelligent, and fully bilingual new Liberal party leader. The Liberals' smooth transition contrasted with the in-fighting PCs that were still recovering from as Diefenbaker departed and Robert Stanfield replaced him.

**III. Pierre Elliot Trudeau** (October 18, 1919 – September 28, 2000)

**Minority Government Period:**
January 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974 (29th Parliament)

Trudeau's single minority government (his second in power), lasted from January, 1973 to May, 1974, with the help of the NDP and its new leader David Lewis. Trudeau barely beat out the PCs' Robert Stanfield after a recount; the final seat count was Liberals 109, PCs 107, NDP 31, and Social Credit 15, with a couple of independents (Duffy, 2002, p. 244). Trudeau's share of the vote in Quebec was barely higher than what Pearson held on to in the 1958 election when Diefenbaker won the largest majority in Canadian history (Gwyn, 1980, p. 136). The loss of a majority was based on an economic crisis that many Canadians felt the Liberals had a part in creating, and a lacklustre campaign under the poorly chosen slogan "The Land is Strong"; the weak frame tried to link the myth of Trudeau's folksy naturalism with strong leadership. During his first mandate, Trudeau was initially supported by Canadians for his handling of the 1970 October Crisis in Quebec, but his later push for official bilingualism rubbed many English-Canadians the wrong way by the time of the 1972 election.

Trudeau's second government came to power during a global energy crisis and rampant inflation, while dealing with the impact of using relatively new Keynesian economics to run deficits to pay for public expenditures and create jobs. The government was elected on a platform of restraint, but soon had to give way to spending on public projects because it needed the support of the NDP and worked hard to keep it. That partnership lasted as long as it could, but Trudeau called the 1974 election because he wanted to control his own government's agenda again—the decision was about regaining power.

Christina McCall-Newman's *Grits* (1982) described the Liberals' struggles during this period:

> It was an article of the modern Liberal faith that the leader was never blamed for disasters; the leader had to be beyond reproach. […] This same attitude was put to work for Trudeau after the near defeat of 1972. It was his advisors, Ivan Head, Jim Davey, and the rest of the technocrats in the PMO, who were blamed for having "isolated the PM from the political process", as if he were some passive object without free will. (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 147)

Trudeau's team changed in response to the loss. The first change was to satisfy the Bay Street business group by bringing in John Turner as Finance Minister to balance the books during the period of restraint. Trudeau also increased the number of English-Canadian MPs in his office for regional coverage by "substituting for the technocrat intellectuals of his first regime a more politically experienced staff that included two defeated MPs, Martin O'Connell and John Roberts" (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 150). On Coutts' advice, he also brought back Senator Keith Davey, a Pearson-era Liberal, and Jean Marchand to lead the campaign committee.

The campaign team would implement strategic planning in the next election campaign using new riding-based polling tactics to replace Jim Davey's previous Trudeau-mania period campaign style of hype with no substance. These riding-based polls did not measure public perceptions of issues and frames as dynamically as today, but it was the first run at understanding a party's statistical support by riding each month in the run up to, and throughout, the election. The strategy helped the Liberals plan the best moment to craft an end to the minority situation.

With the new team in place, the key would be to control the agenda and reframe Trudeau as the leader who listened to Canadians, and who could best guide the divided House. Despite the inclusion of Turner, the team very quickly a public works budget was

composed to satisfy the NDP, which led to numerous reports of arguments between Trudeau and Turner. McCall-Newman described the accomplishments of Liberal-NDP partnership as follows:

> The Liberals had indexed personal income taxes, announced a new energy policy, set up the Foreign Investment Review Agency, established the Food Prices Review Board, passed the Election Expenses Act, raised old age pensions and family allowances, and initiated a precedent-setting inquiry into a proposed gas pipeline in the Mackenzie Valley, under the direction of Mr. Justice Thomas Berger, a former NDP MP from British Columbia. (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 152)

Based on these successes, the Toronto group leaked to the press that Trudeau did not want an election "(which was partly true, since Trudeau disliked campaigns and never wanted an election) and pretended the party apparatus was in disarray" (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 152).

In truth, the party was entirely ready for the election campaign and ran a dream campaign that "rivaled in their fevered minds the Kennedy campaign of 1960 for sheer professional style" (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 152). Trudeau's minority government link with the NDP was engineered to demonstrate his pragmatism and present the fact that he could work well with others during difficult periods. This image was developed in contrast to the media image created of Trudeau during his first government that depicted him as being a controlling autocrat who disparaged other parliamentarians.

A keen example of how Trudeau's agenda developed within the new political environment is found in John English's *Just Watch Me* (2009):

> As the debate over the economy developed within both the Cabinet and the government as a whole, the differences between the prime minister and the finance minister became personal and ideological. Trudeau came to be identified with policies on the left, while Turner [the finance minister], who had developed excellent relations with his conservative American counterpart, George Schultz, became the voice of "business" and the "Americans." The perception was

> unfair—finance ministers are invariably regarded as a conservative force within government—but the minority situation exacerbated the impression. (English, 2009, p. 213)

Trudeau's Throne Speech made clear a shift to the left using NDP support to retain minority power. However, the times called for cost cutting, stimulative tax cuts, and downsizing government according to Turner. A clash ensued with Trudeau creating a budget that was "highly stimulative, precedent setting in its deficit, and politically valuable in that it bought time for the NDP-Liberal alliance" (English, 2009, p. 214). Turner was unhappy with the budget, and a rivalry with Trudeau was formed, with Trudeau being well aware that Turner could be his successor if he failed. Turner would however eventually resign his position in 1975 after the return to a majority, and he remained outside politics until 1984.

Trudeau's agenda focused on two issues: the economy and international events (English, 2009, p. 210). His major achievements in minority government included the Foreign Investment Review (1973) and the National Energy Program (N.E.P., 1973), which were influenced by the NDP to support publically-funded national solutions. The N.E.P. was much hated in the western provinces at the time for being a cash grab by Ottawa, and it has not been forgotten there to the present day (Cook & Belanger, 2007, p. 440).

English's biography noted Trudeau's energized and focused style during this period:

> In the first year of his marriage, Trudeau's aides, ministers, and MPs saw an even more intensely focused and hard-working prime minister than they had known before. His determination after the 1972 election not only to govern strongly but also to lay the foundation for a new Liberal majority had a major impact on his administration: first, he was less cautious and more willing to take chances; and second, he considered the expressly political consequences of his

> government's decisions and actions far more often than he had before. And those late nights on the files brought rewards every weekday morning when the stream of meetings began: Trudeau often knew briefs better than the relevant ministers. (English, 2009, p. 210)

When the time suited him just one year later, Trudeau created a budget that could not be supported by the opposition and the government fell, only for him to be elected back to a majority for having led Canada through some tough economic times and having Trudeaumania return to its highest levels. However, no Liberal seats were left in Alberta from the N.E.P. fallout.

As Marc Lalonde (1971) described, Trudeau was the first prime minister to fully expand and use the PMO to maintain his power through consciously framing each issue using polls—what Savoie (2008) would eventually describe as the developing "court" that would strip power away from the Cabinet and House to make decisions by pronouncement. How did Trudeau develop this capacity in the PMO?

Trudeau's leadership skills must first be assessed to answer this question. From the beginning of his career Trudeau was framed as "a fresh face [that] played to Canadians' sense of having been badly served by the Diefenbaker-Pearson generation of fuddy-duddy politicians" (Bliss, 1994, p. 250). Bliss wrote that by the time he was in power, "Most of his ministers and backbenchers were intellectually in awe of Trudeau" (Bliss, 1994, p. 257). Bliss provided a number of examples of MPs admiring Trudeau in the same kinds of ways that others have remarked that King and Mulroney were also admired by their Cabinets for their intellect and ability to win elections, but most Canadians place the 1970s "Trudeaumania" as the height of all Canadian leaders' media acumen.

Trudeau's intelligence and wit aligned with a renewed vision (and frame) of "one

Canada" that many Canadians supported, in contrast to the new Tory leader Robert Stanfield, who argued there should be "deux nations" within Canada (Bliss, 1994, p. 250). Functionally during his majority parliaments, Trudeau had the support of the people and his MPs to do as he would with the PMO, but the expanding of the government bureaucratization in the period of NDP support meant leaders required new tools and technologies to achieve their agendas.

In the 1970s, Bliss described Trudeau's only minority situation as shifting to the left because of the Liberal partnership with the NDP that could very much be situated in today's agenda-setting parlance as having reframed the Liberals to be more attractive to Canadians during difficult economic times:

> The second Trudeau government took the limits off public spending. Egged on by the NDP, it raised welfare payments of all kinds, indexing many of them to the cost of living. It use direct controls to limit domestic petroleum prices, levied huge taxes on petroleum exports, and spent that windfall to subsidize imports. It became more nationalistic, implementing large chunks of [Pearson's Finance Minister] Walter Gordon's earlier protectionist agenda, making the Yankees out to be the villains. (Bliss, 1994, p. 260)

Trudeau's memoirs stated that his strategy was not dictated by the NDP support, but that he tended to let his ministers make decisions about economic issues. In 1974, regional development and scapegoating foreign-owned energy companies to Canadians helped the Liberals with the NDP support to create Petro-Canada as a solution to the economic woes of inflation during a recession. In the following election, Trudeau framed Stanfield as an ineffective leader, but later adopted a few of Stanfield's election policies to help the economic situation, which some say was the act that made him a true politician (i.e. selling out his principles)—this is notably a tactic Harper used when the world economic

recession hit in late 2008, with the creation of stimulus funds that the Stéphane Dion-led Liberals had originally advocated.

Richard Gwyn's *The Northern Magus* (1980) described Trudeau's minority government period as so stressful from the constant struggle of framing and reframing that after having been handed back his majority he simply stopped government in 1975:

> Trudeau had simply reached down and switched the government's motor off. […] Trudeau was tired, physically and emotionally, after the eighteen-month strain of keeping a minority government going, followed by a hectic campaign. Most of his ministers were also tired, and Trudeau had brought in only a couple of activist newcomers. (Gwyn, 1980, p. 173)

During the minority period, Trudeau turned to political professionals and media experts to refashion his image to help regain his majority. His image management was taken over by his new chief of staff in the PMO, James Coutts, and the old Pearson Liberal party machine of Walter Gordon and Jim Davey were ousted by the newcomers to the court (Gwyn, 1980, p. 168).

Gwyn presented the shift in tactics that this transition brought forth as follows:

> In [Jim] Davey's era, Trudeau's schedule for the year had been mapped in detail on wall-size flow charts, maintained in a locked "war room." Coutts replaced these with a graph of the monthly Gallup Poll, plotted out over the past ten years. Each month, the new results were matched against the 282 Commons constituencies; then, depending on whether the figures were up or down, the notations against ridings would be changed from "safe Liberal" and "Liberal-leaning" to "doubtful" or "Conservative/NDP leaning". (Gwyn, 1980, p. 169)

Gwyn's description sounds quaint now given that this information is now commonly available during elections from the media have taken over tracking the horse race. However, his account is notable as a timepiece for when the hyper-mediated shift occurred in Canadian politics.

At the same time, another shift occurred in the public service alongside the technological shift. Gwyn tells us this was an age when public servants started to bend the rules following the practices of the politicians. The dutiful, thrifty management traditions of the War Child generation were on the way out, and the Baby Boomers me-first attitudes were influencing the generational shift in the ‘60s and ‘70s. For example, in a 1976 interview journalist Barbara Frum questioned Trudeau’s blatant displays of rich isolation and educated privilege during a time of recession, and he stated, “But what you call isolated, do you know any Prime Minister who has travelled more than I in the country, and met more groups more often?” (Gwyn, 1980, p. 164). After the interview off camera, he glared at Frum for asking the question and asked if she felt isolated from being privileged; she answered yes.

After the majority win, Gwyn described Trudeau having spent public money on a $200 000 in-door pool at 24 Sussex Drive (the cost had to eventually be covered by Liberal donations to avoid scandal), an $80 000 armour-plated Cadillac, and $86 700 to refurbish the PMO (Gwyn, 1980, p. 166). Such spending practices were noted by public servants, who followed suit with their own cash grabs:

> More and more public servants took advantage of the indexed pensions they had engineered for themselves to retire early. Often, they signed up immediately with their old departments, on contract, or […] put their contracts and knowledge to work as lobbyists, or “consultants” as they preferred to be called. This practice, unknown in the past, became so common that in 1976, Trudeau had to issue guidelines […]. (Gwyn, 1980, p. 167)

Overall, Gwyn’s accounts depict the types of practices that have led to what Savoie (1999; 2008) diagnosed as big government spending being directed, limited, and controlled by a dominant PMO.

McCall-Newman's work substantiates similar accounts where inner circle PMO Liberal advisors like Coutts, Lalonde, Marchand, Pelletier, and Pitfield were all able to have radically new influences on the Prime Minister. For example, she described the minority situation as follows:

> [Trudeau] was busy handling a volatile minority situation in the House of Commons with the nimble aid of the House Leader, Allan MacEachen, and he didn't want an election triggered before he and the party were ready. Behind the scenes, preparations were brought into play. Patronage of one kind or another was used to dazzling effect, to repay the worn-out and to make way for the ambitious, just as it had been used for decades by Grits on the "Them that has gives and gits" principle. Dozens of Pearson Liberals were drawn back into active party work so that their skills and connections could be called on once the election writs were issued. (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 152)

This level of complexity for campaign networking and establishing agenda-setting control has not abated since the 1970s. The 1974 campaign was very different from 1972 because of Coutts's work as Trudeau's campaign organizer, Marchand's campaign leadership in Quebec, and Davey's work guiding the rest of Canada. Coutts began an information revolution by using computers for campaign organizing and measuring opinion polling linked with each riding. Coutts would eventually frame Joe Clark as "the wimp", in the 1979 election campaign, using early opinion research, and the label stuck throughout Clark's campaign, but it did not work to return a Liberal majority.

Trudeau advisor Senator Keith Davey's *The Rainmaker: A Passion for Politics* (1986) reads as a how-to guide for creating strong government agendas and framing them according to voter desires. He provided two rich play lists for strategizing using polling (Table 14 below) and working with the media (Table 15 below).

| Table 14: Seven Ground Rules About Polling (Davey, 1986, pp. 175-176) |
| --- |
| 1. Do not poll to find out whether you are winning or losing. That you will find out absolutely free of charge on election day. What you want to know is why you are winning or why you are losing and what you can do to exploit an advantage or defend a weakness.<br><br>2. Research only useful information. Computers, I concede, are overtaking this particular ground rule because increasingly, we are able to target them very directly. […]<br><br>3. Analyze trends, not specific numbers. In other words, look at the polling forest and not the statistical trees.<br><br>4. Maximize security. Too many people are unable to interpret the information correctly—and some will anyway be tempted to tell other people; that is how the other parties can get your numbers.<br><br>5. It should come as no surprise that the issues of concern in rank order vary slightly, if at all, across Canada. What is bothering a citizen in Red Deer or Brandon is usually what is bothering a citizen in Charlottetown or Fredericton.<br><br>6. It should be noted that two points recur in any survey. The majority of Canadians always want lower taxes and, conversely, more and better services.<br><br>7. Those people who are concerned about the efficacy of polling should realize that in the final analysis it is the essence of Greek democracy. Those who disagree will be terrified to realize just how sophisticated polling has already become.<br><br>8. "If I had an eighth ground rule it would relate to the plethora of media-sponsored public opinion polls. No media outlet of consequence wants to be caught without its own poll in any given campaign. The problem is that most people reading these polls fail to understand them." |

| **Table 15: Advice for Aspiring Politicians to Deal with the Media** |
|---|
| 1. No matter how close your relationship with any member of the working press, that person will put his craft ahead of your friendship.<br>2. Journalism is not a profession, although some journalists are professional.<br>3. In any interview, you have the right to remain silent, or to say, "I don't know." Do not allow your own ego to get in the way. No one knows everything.<br>4. If you claim to be misquoted, ninety-nine times out of one hundred you will have been reported accurately. One hundred times out of one hundred if the reporter has a tape recorder, even one that is concealed.<br>5. Be wary of "innocent" reporters.<br>6. When television reports leave long pauses in the interview, do not feel that you have to say something simply to fill the void.<br>7. Never say anything on or off the record that you would not be prepared to see in print or on television.<br>8. Davey provided one last warning taken from Trudeau, which is if your government wins a majority, then the media becomes the "effective Opposition in the next Parliament." |
| **Source:** (Davey, 1986, p. 255) |

Davey's book is an expert practitioner's take on politicking, and stands out as a standard for modern politics in Canada in that category. He described how he would meet with Trudeau regularly to present a "cursory overview of the political landscape" (Davey, 1986, p. 171), which was developed from his on-going evidence-based issue research; with each issue he would provide some possible solutions, of which Trudeau would always be the final judge.

Coming out of the minority government period, Davey recounted how the Liberals manufactured their own defeat to regain power in the ensuing election. The main vote on Turner's budget on May 8, 1974, was the final straw for the NDP, which at that time led to just the third instance of the ruling party being defeated in the House.

However, Trudeau had ramped up his rhetoric in the House to frame the NDP too, stating at one time that the NDP were "hanging onto us like seagulls on a fishing vessel, claiming that they are really steering the ship!" (Davey, 1986, p. 175). Davey stated that these successful tactics helped return Liberal supporters in droves because they framed Trudeau as a decisive leader.

Davey also discussed key innovations in campaigning during this period. He stated that using polls (as in Table 15 above) helped to inform the Liberals' overall strategic game plan and policy agenda, which was communicated to every Liberal MP early in the campaign so that they could follow Trudeau's lead on all policy decisions (Davey, 1986, p. 175). His playbook listed ideas from other parties and elections, including Diefenbaker's successful use of crossing the country in a train to create positive images of the Prime Minister interacting with Canadians, which the Liberals employed in the east against Stanfield early in the campaign.

In terms of framing, the main policy challenge that Davey identified was that Trudeau beat Stanfield in terms of leadership in most polls, but lost in terms of economic issues:

> We analyzed some twenty indices about who was the best speaker, the brightest, the best for Canada, the most intelligent, the best for youth, the best for the economy, and so on. Our strategy was obvious. If people went in to the vote thinking about prices, we had to lose; but if they were thinking about leadership, we had to win. Inflation was the problem and leadership was the issue. (Davey, 1986, p. 177)

With these insights, Trudeau kept leadership in the minds of Canadians and framed Stanfield's economic policies of wage and price freezes for the public sector using the catchphrase, "Zap! You're frozen!" Another notable tactic included Trudeau going directly to the people using televised prime ministerial addresses if the media turned

negative, thereby avoiding the media completely (Davey, 1986, p. 250).

Such tactics demonstrate the Liberal machine's powerful use of framing and agenda setting during the Davey era.

Patrick Gossage's *Close to Charisma* (1987) is also useful for describing the PMO at the time. His work came shortly after Trudeau's minority government period and before Clark's minority government. Gossage worked in Trudeau's Press Office in 1976, and presents the PMO as growing more bureaucratic and larger in the 1970s. He described this period as follows: "The PMO is a loosely structured institution, and below the level of the PM and his principal secretary, Jim Coutts, there is an 'everyone for himself' atmosphere. It did not surprise me that, after a month on the job, I still had not actually met Trudeau" (Gossage, 1987, p. 37).

Gossage defined the PMO as the guarded bridge between the prime minister, the PCO, the House, and the media. The PMO functioned as a buffer or filtering station that Trudeau used to triage his work, and it offered him a sounding board for his decisions before engaging fully with the media or public. He observed that Trudeau kept a distance from his staff to maintain his personal space and establish professionalism in the PMO: "Trudeau demands a lot of his staff but befriends them rarely. I've found that this simplifies life for both" (Gossage, 1987, p. 37).

In terms of the media, Gossage argued that the PMO are the gatekeepers to information in the office:

> While we saw a lot of the PM as he moved about, shook hands, worked in various aircraft, did press events of one kind or another, and performed a wide variety of functions, and while we chatted to him whenever possible, we were seldom involved in any discussions with him that related to what he did or said. For the most part, the Press Office saw grand policy decisions, important appointments, and other affairs of government and state only as material either

> to communicate to the media of to keep from their knowledge as best we could. (Gossage, 1987, p. 23)

Gossage noted that CBC reporters frequently had an edge in receiving interviews, while others were excluded: "The *Globe and Mail* gave up asking. Jeffrey Simpson finally got a twenty-minute, carefully controlled session with him during the 1980 campaign. Richard Gwyn never did get an interview" (Gossage, 1987, p. 27).

Leading into Clark's 1979 win, Gossage described how no one believed the Liberals would win a majority, with the polls showing that it would be a Liberal minority early in the campaign. Instead, the tired and arrogant Trudeau frame paid off with the PCs' electoral success. Gossage said he believe the first sign of the loss came when Trudeau began making announcements in the media concerning Canada's unity being the top issue of the election without first communicating it to his Cabinet for support (Gossage, 1987, p. 174). The lack of teamwork hurt the Liberals across the country as the PCs' populist message took root.

**Table 16: Playbook Examples of Issue Framing in Minority Government**

| Prime Minister | Issue (first-level) | Frame (second-level) | Result |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Trudeau:** January 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974 | The Economy: Minority government partnership with the NDP required left-leaning solutions. | Trudeau was reframed from an aloof elitist leader to someone who could build consensus in the House through reasonable partnerships on key agenda issues. | **Success:** The end of Trudeau's only minority government that led him back to a majority. |

**Summary: Pierre Trudeau**
**January 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974 (29th Parliament)**

1. The platform and dominant agenda when the PM was elected:

   Trudeau's agenda during minority government prioritized restraint and cost controls as the economy was entering a period of uncertainty after the Pearson-era high.

2. The minority situation:

   The minority situation was super fragile with just a two seat difference existing between the Liberals and PCs. The day-to-day stresses notably wore upon the Liberals who did not have full control of their agenda due to the partnership with the NDP.

3. The main agenda change during the mandate (the party policy):

   Trudeau and Turner consistently fought with the NDP to balance an austerity budget with some public works spending to create jobs.

4. The role of the PM during any changes (the frame):

   A shift in Trudeau's team was designed to regain control of the House and his agenda following the advice of the PMO and Liberal party elites. Trudeau's image was reframed at this time to be presented to the public as someone who could build consensus among parties.

5. How did the minority collapse:

   When the time suited him, Trudeau created a budget that could not be supported by the opposition and the government fell on a confidence vote.

**IV. Joe Clark** (born June 5, 1939)

**Minority Government Period:**
October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979 (31st Parliament)

Joe Clark's minority government fell very quickly, within six months of taking power, because of his attempt to rule as if he had a majority when the political climate clearly did not support his decisions (Simpson, 1980). Clark was elected on a platform of 211 campaign promises; Duffy broke these down into three categories that were intended to attract three different types of voter: "one for their anti-spending fans of the hot new 'monetarist' economics; another for their regional development fans from poorer ridings;

a third for their small businessmen who abhorred deficits" (Duffy, 2002, p. 272). Clark was positioned as someone who cared for businesses and Canadian families, despite many of his policies sometimes appearing to conflict one another. In contrast, Trudeau was framed as arrogant and out of touch. Duffy observed that Clark's tactics were similar to Diefenbaker's "populist rush" election strategy, where Clark's divisive politics helped the PCs gain seats in every province, without using Quebec (Clark's PCs only won 2 seats in Quebec). Notably, these strategies have been fairly similar for Harper's Tories.

Clark campaigned on the slogans, "Let's get Canada working again," and "It's time for a change - give the future a chance!" Duffy portrayed the campaign as the height of modern media tactics when parties became adept at using pollsters and solidified the standard practices of using "earned media" (the party's message being carried in the press) and "bought media" (paid advertising; Duffy, 2002, p. 267). Duffy stated, "[t]he elections of 1957, 1965, and 1972 had all been decided during the [8 week] writ period. With a possible swing of 8 to 10 per cent of voters changing their minds during the campaign", but with each election the swing vote was becoming smaller because of the campaign tactics of carving up the electorate (Duffy, 2002, p. 267).

Agenda-setting tactics, media framing, and public persuasion became intertwined at this time and have not abated since. The populist rush worked despite Clark being framed as a weak leader in the media, and the PCs won 136 seats, the Liberals ended up losing 27 seats, to earn 114 in the House; the NDP under Ed Broadbent earned 26, and the Social Credit 6.

Critics charged that the Clark government suffered from two key issues: (i) a large two-tiered Cabinet, and (ii) Clark governing in an effort to achieve all of his

election promises that were sometimes contradictory. Granatstein and Hillmer (1999) used the pollster Allan Gregg's depiction of Joe Clark's entry into the role of Prime Minister as a starting point for their analysis of his tenure: "It may not be an exaggeration to suggest that a national leader has rarely, if ever, assumed office with lower expectations concerning his ability to govern" (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p. 171). Despite beating Trudeau a few seats shy of a majority, the Conservatives could not frame the election as a victory, because Canadians did not view Clark as a leader and he had very low popularity in public polls.

Granatstein and Hillmer depicted Clark's executive style as being too fragmented and far-reaching to control his large Cabinet:

> There was an element of aggression and sometimes even recklessness about Clark. His model was John Diefenbaker, not Mackenzie King. [...] There were 211 campaign promises. Clark took their implementation very seriously, in spite of advice to the contrary, and his government sustained heavy damage as it backed tortuously away from two of its most celebrated but unpopular pledges: to move the Canadian Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and to sell off the federal government-created oil company, Petro-Canada. (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p.171)

Clark boldly asserted that he would govern as if he had a majority and pursued each of his election promises passionately. However, Clark flip-flopped on his initial positions in both the embassy and Petro-Canada cases, and Canadians read these moves as signs of weakness (so did the Liberals).

In terms of Petro-Canada, Clark decided to stay true to his roots in towing his home-province of Alberta's political line to privatize the crown corporation, but most Canadians and most of his own Cabinet wanted to keep it while Canada was experiencing rising interest rates, inflation, and energy shortages. A NDP slogan appeared at the time stating, "Save Petro-Canada, Sell Clark" (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p. 173).

Eventually a report was produced by his own appointed task force that concluded it would be difficult to privatize Petro-Canada.

After this about face, Clark was told that his first budget would not pass by the time the first legislature began four months into his mandate. That day would become known as "the Glorious 13th, the fateful day in December 1979 when Liberal strategists summoned enough of their MPs to the House of Commons, including one brought by ambulance from an Ottawa hospital, to pass a motion of non-confidence against Joe Clark's government" (Chong, 2010).

Clark audaciously believed that Canadians would punish the opposition parties for forcing an election so early, especially as the Liberals were leaderless with Trudeau having resigned three weeks earlier. He was, however, sadly disappointed when Trudeau returned and won a majority after the government fell by six votes on December 13th, 1979. Many Canadians may recall the famous throwing of paper into the air in the House after the failed count; MPs were visibly relieved that the combative minority government was over.

Jeffrey Simpson's *Discipline of Power* (1980) is a detailed account of Joe Clark's leadership during his sole minority government. He portrayed Clark's executive style as follows:

> Perhaps because of a surfeit of work and their own inexperience, but more likely because of a lack of sure direction from Joe Clark and his advisor, the Cabinet drifted into a series of disastrous assumptions that led to the Conservative Party's defeat in the 1980 election. It seemed inconceivable that such an intelligent and politically sensitive group of men and women could have ignored the many danger signals that loomed along the way. Indeed some ministers had tried to point them out. (Simpson, 1980, p. 92)

In his chapter on "Setting a Course," Simpson explained that Clark's Cabinet missed satisfying two key groups of Conservative party faithful: (i) MPs from the Diefenbaker era who had experience, and (ii) MPs from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia who were left out due to regional balance decisions. Paul Yewchuk, Lloyd Crouse, and Robert Coates made their grievances public for being left out of the Cabinet.

Another institutional shift affected decision making in the party: the size of the Cabinet. Simpson noted that "When Diefenbaker formed his first ministry, the Cabinet had twenty-three members. By 1968, the Cabinet had grown to thirty-three members. Trudeau, like Clark, recognized that such a large group was too unwieldy to make expeditious decisions" (Simpson, 1980, p. 94). Trudeau solved the issue by harnessing the power of the PMO and also by structuring his Cabinet around a central committee, the Priorities and Planning Committee, which still allowed the entire Liberal Cabinet access to decision making.

Clark instead tried to create a two-tiered inner and outer Cabinet, following models tried in Ontario and Quebec in different variations. Ontario eventually scrapped the model because its "super-ministers" operated in a vacuum outside of the ministries, but it worked well in Quebec under the Parti Quebecois whose super-ministers created broad cultural policies and reports focusing on federal-provincial relations. For Clark, the two-tiers created two classes of ministers and just as ministers felt slighted for the reasons of representation in the inner Cabinet, ministers in the outer Cabinet were liable to feel like less important ministers.

Along with tensions in the Cabinet, Clark's PMO was blamed for their mismanagement of key issues. Simpson stated, "[the PMO's] budget grew from $900,800

in 1970 to $2.8 million in 1979" (Simpson, 1980, p.99). Despite the vast increase in expenditures, Clark's key advisors Jim Gilles, William Neville, and Lowell Murray were targeted for their stubborn commitment to keeping electoral promises in the face of public disapproval, and for also not preparing Clark for dealing with internal Cabinet demands prior to meetings.

One last PC work provides valuable insights into changes in framing and agenda-setting techniques before turning to the contemporary networked period in the new millennium. Michael Gratton's *"So, what are the boys saying?": An Inside Look at Brian Mulroney in Power* (1987) does not describe minority government, but it does present how the Mulroney PMO struggled to construct an effective agenda after the PCs gained their first majority in 26 years—and only the second in 54 years. Gratton worked in the PMO as Mulroney's Press Secretary. His book is written in the same insider's tone as Davey's, and in it, he acknowledges Davey as a legendary advisor (Gratton, 1987, p. 70); however, Gratton's work holds less reverence for his own Prime Minister as he depicted how he became Mulroney's scapegoat for errors in the PC government.

In the 1984 election, Mulroney had just led the PCs to the greatest majority in Canadian history, winning over half the popular vote, with no other party having more than 50-seats, which allowed the Conservatives to do as they wished. Gratton argued that the PCs' agenda-setting strategies suffered greatly under Mulroney because the Prime Minister was the only person who knew what the entire strategic plan was (if one existed). He wrote, "Gradually, the pressure of events forced him to open up somewhat, and to commission the preparation of an overall strategic plan. Still, I can't say that the Mulroney 'vision' was ever clear to me or to anyone else" (Gratton, 1984, p. xiii).

Gratton stated, in support of Mulroney's choice not to share a common agenda, that the Prime Minister was forced to keep his own counsel so cautiously because other PC MPs were power hungry and vying for leadership by often leaking things to the press for political purposes. Overall, Gratton argued that Mulroney's government came to a swift end because the PCs were not skilled at crafting an effective agenda, working as a team, and communicating their plans to the public. He believed Mulroney's downfall came because of the Prime Minister's obsession with (i) gaining positive media spin from an industry that feeds on the self-absorbed, (ii) comparing himself to Trudeau and his predecessor's heights of popularity, and (iii) constantly striving for perfection (Gratton, 1984, pp. 70-71). The PC loss led to the return of the Liberals' dominance under Jean Chrétien.

**Table 17: Playbook Examples of Issue Framing in Minority Government**

| Prime Minister | Issue (first-level) | Frame (second-level) | Result |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Clark:** October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979 | Leadership. | Clark framed his leadership as committed to fulfilling each of his election promises. | **Failed:** His agenda was too large and contradictory to fulfill. |

**Summary: Joe Clark**
**October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979 (31st Parliament)**

1. The platform and dominant agenda when the PM was elected:

   Clark created a populist rush like that of Diefenbaker's first campaign and challenged Canadians to vote Trudeau's establishment out of Ottawa (functionally firing them from office).

2. The minority situation (e.g. fragile, super fragile, impossible?):

   An impossible situation: the Liberals and the NDP could pull the plug on the government at any time if any weakness in Clark's leadership and support became evident.

3. The main agenda change during the mandate (the party policy):

   The main change during Clark's government occurred before the House had returned to session. Trudeau came out of retirement and summoned enough MPs to vote.

4. The role of the PM during any changes (the frame):

   Clark chose to follow a large, contradictory agenda while using a two-tiered Cabinet that was difficult to steer.

5. How did the minority collapse:

   The government fell in a confidence vote on December 13th, 1979.

## Conclusion: Agenda setting in Minority Government in the Age of Mass Media

From these accounts, it is clear that both the PMO and the Cabinet are the two key partisan sources of power for setting the government's agenda. They direct and use the information provided by the public service units of the PCO and the ministerial line departments to make agenda priorities and decisions. The executive style of the prime minister during minority government requires both the PMO and the Cabinet to be very disciplined, or else the ruling party risks suffering the consequences of mismanaging its agenda as both Meighen and Clark did in exemplary fashions.

The expert practitioner's accounts from Kent, Davey, Gossage, and Gratton also lent credence to the convergence of power in the PMO in modern times. They each

described aspects of how the government's agenda *is* the primary tool for retaining power and support in the House. The modern history of agenda setting demonstrated the power of an increased PMO to measure and monitor public opinion under Trudeau, and how the third party options with the NDP and Social Credit began to play a larger partnership roll in the 1970s. This summary brings us to the present day in terms of describing the *successful* tactics of agenda setting in Canada's minority government context.

The key considerations for modern minority government strategists can now be formally categorized based on the analysis above of the "levers of power", by slightly revising Dobell (2000) and Russell's (2008) previous list of factors:

1. **Executive Style:** Did the Prime Minister bargain for power, broker a deal, or go it alone when evaluating what partnerships could be formed for key pieces of legislation (either formally or informally, with individual MPs or an entire party)? Was the Prime Minister's style monarchical (e.g. Diefenbaker and Trudeau) or collaborative (e.g. Clark, King, and Pearson)?

2. **Framing the Agenda (i.e. the dominant problem, politics, and policy stream issue):** Did the Prime Minister accurately measure and judge the national mood on the key issues of the period by crafting messages that successfully set the governments agenda (e.g. Diefenbaker in 1958; King in 1926; Pearson in 1963; Trudeau in 1974)?

3. **Institutional Factors (i.e. support in Cabinet and the House):** Did the Prime minister have a "prime-minister centred Cabinet" (e.g. Diefenbaker and Trudeau) or a "decentralized Cabinet" (e.g. Clark, King, and Pearson)? Was leadership demonstrated through using the balance of power in the House to the government's advantage (e.g. King, Pearson, and Trudeau), or did the Prime Minister's poor judgement lead to the Cabinet questioning decisions openly, maybe even splintering (e.g. Diefenbaker and Clark)?

4. **Media Technologies:** Did the Prime Minister leverage new technology to gain and maintain power during the minority government (e.g. Diefenbaker's use of television, and Trudeau's use of polling)?

These four categories will be used to assess the Martin and Harper governments from 2004-2011 in the following chapters.

The review above clearly supports that a “prime-minister centred cabinet” and dominant executive style have been used successfully during minority government periods to build majority governments (e.g. King, Diefenbaker, and Trudeau). Canadian political parties that have used disciplined agenda-setting and partnering strategies were able to achieve majority governments.

Trudeau’s PMO team also demonstrated the successful uses of modern mass media technologies during their minority government, by centralizing power in the PMO and adopting computers to crunch numbers on demographic voter support on key issues for each national riding .Trudeau used national television first to build his hype and attract voters in the Trudeaumania period, then later to sidestep the media through televised prime ministerial addresses if their coverage was negative.

These successful media strategies developed over time as television was a game changer as early as Diefenbaker’s run for Prime Minister against Pearson in 1957-58, when he used the medium to help define his leadership image in contrast to Pearson who came across poorly to broadcast audiences. The media later hurt Diefenbaker though when he stumbled in his second minority government, unable to define the agenda to his advantage, while dealing with the international missile crisis; Pearson the peacekeeper came through as the leader with an appropriate ”frame” for the issue, while Diefenbaker’s Cabinet crumbled from within.

Clark’s team also used polling to build a populist rush against Trudeau’s Ottawa establishment, and resisted being labelled as “the wimp” in the media. Once in power though, Clark could not translate the electoral support into a stable government, as he lacked the leadership to focus his massive agenda.

Overall, the modern minority government tactics described above present how agenda-setting and framing skills have become more important under minority governments because the government obviously cannot push through agendas as seamlessly as during majority periods. Agenda setting is difficult in the best of times, but in the past, it was simpler in that communication technologies were not as developed and governments had a great deal more time to articulate their positions to take advantage of the developing modern newspaper cycle, instead of dealing with the daily television cycle that took over after WWII as the dominant medium.

## Chapter Five
## Agenda Setting through Party Platforms, 2004-2008

Academics and journalists alike have noted Prime Minister Paul Martin and Stephen Harper's efforts in exerting governance within minority positions in parliament (Clarkson, 2004; 2005; LeDuc et al., 2011; Johnson, 2006; Kozolanka, 2009; MacKay, 2005; Page, 2006; Pammett & Dornan, 2004, 2006, 2008; Russell, 2008; Wells, 2007), but few have examined how their efforts in the first step of governing—agenda setting—were very different. This chapter examines the terms of Paul Martin (June 28, 2004 – February 6, 2006) and Stephen Harper (February 6, 2006 – May 2, 2011) by comparing their electoral platforms through textual analyses. The comparisons bring to light how Martin and Harper managed their agenda setting during Canada's third period of sustained minority governments, this time in the hypermodern media era.

The argument presented in this chapter is that the Conservative party changed its approach dramatically after the 2004 election and worked to control its message by creating a sharply focused platform in the 2006 election campaign. This tactic's effectiveness was notable when compared to the platform language of the Liberals' and the NDPs', which shared many common themes, allowing the Conservative platform to stand out distinctly among the three parties. Clearly, the Conservative party was addressing itself to a distinctly identified and particular voter model. This strict agenda setting was part of a successful coordinated communication strategy that also included sharp attacks: framing the opposition leadership as weak, and costing out the opposition's platforms as fiscally irresponsible (Kozolanka, 2009; Pammett & Dornan, 2006, 2008). The synchronized tactics evidently worked. They led to an increase in the Conservatives' electoral support by 25 seats in 2006, and 19 more seats in 2008, by galvanizing their

base and targeting battleground ridings with strategic wedge issues. In this battle, the Liberals lost control of their agenda.

This chapter shows how the platforms changed from 2004-2008, focusing on which issue frames changed between each party in each election, and how the agendas changed during minority government to a period when the government could no longer sit with one single election agenda due to pressure from the opposition and economic forces in the 2008 global recession. Following the previous chapter's breakdown, the post-millennial minority government platforms are analyzed in terms of how each party differentiated itself from its competitors during the campaign and how their respective agendas reflected the key four factors of success in minority government: (i) Executive Style, (ii) Framing the Agenda, (iii) Institutional Factors, and (iv) Media Technologies. Overall, the Conservative platform for the 2008-2011 period presented the most dramatic change as compared to the government's agenda, when stimulus spending was justified during the economic downturn, and thus ran counter to party ideology and the 2008 platform promises of smaller government and reducing the deficit.

For empirical support, new digital methods are used to establish the salient agenda issues and their frames in the partisan platforms during the three elections that led to the creation of minority governments since 2004 (the 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections, specifically). Rogers' issue networks method (2004) allows researchers to document and record the prevalence of the top key issues used by each political party in their representative media documents by tracking single words, couplets, or repeating phrases (as was discussed in chapter one of this dissertation). Highly salient policy issues are selected for this analysis based on the issue frames that were directly presented in the

English-speaking party platforms. The final "bag" of salient issues, following Rogers' methodological terminology, is identified in this chapter in terms of each party's stated agenda items recorded in their platforms, and then the top issues are assessed through the remainder of this dissertation and used for comparison with the agenda items that each prime minister in power accomplished.

This analysis demonstrates that there were clear strategic transitions between electoral platform issues. The Conservative party was particularly adept in this, notably changing its platform to accommodate the political environment in 2006. This chapter will discuss how each party highlighted particular issues and changed its frames over time. The method also captures the issue framing techniques Lakoff (2004; 2007) identified in the 2005 U.S. elections, where the Bush Republicans' collective issue framing represented a "strict parent" frame and the Democrats' a "nurturing parent" frame.

Political communication scholars have demonstrated that if a party fails to change their frames or framed their agenda in a way that was unappetizing to the electorate, their communication strategy will fumble from crisis to crisis (Kingdon, 1984; Lakoff, 2004; 2007). This effect creates a need for repetitive, consistent messaging to communicate a party's top agenda items, therefore tracking word frequencies is an effective way to identify the party's uses of language to frame key issues (i.e. we can assume parties are not going to imbed or avoid communicating election agenda items, or they would otherwise suffer the wrath of the electorate or the opposition in a minority situation). The election agendas can be discerned through the identification of (i) distinct and strict agendas, or (ii) conversely, broad, poorly defined agendas, or (iii) shared overlapping

agenda issue frames that aligned with other parties. First, the top issue units of each platform must be identified to identify any patterns.

## I. The Martin and Harper Agenda-Setting Tactics

Table 18 presents a summary of the number of seats held by each party for the 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011 elections (see Table 18 below).

| **Table 18: Party Seats Elected in 2004-2011** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **CP** | **LIB** | **BQ** | **NDP** | **IND** | **GRN** |
| 2011 | 166 | 34 | 4 | 103 | - | 1 |
| 2008 | 143 | 77 | 49 | 37 | 2 | - |
| 2006 | 124 | 103 | 51 | 29 | 1 | - |
| 2004 | 99 | 135 | 54 | 19 | 1 | - |

There are many factors that could have contributed to the increase in the Conservatives' number of seats, including the Liberal Sponsorship Scandal, Paul Martin and Stéphane Dion's leadership skills, party infighting among the Liberals, voter turnout, vote splitting between the Liberal and NDP, and regional differences in political support. Of note, voter turnout had fallen for each election since the last peak of 64.1% in 2000; in 2004, it was 63.1%, 61.1% in 2006, and 58.8% in 2008 (and inched up slightly in 2011, to 61.4%, when the Conservatives earned their first majority with just 39.62%, just 1.92% more than in 2008).

Dufresne, Nevitte, and Blais (2011) identified that Canadians in fact support minority government outcomes for partisan strategic reasons, despite the conventional wisdom being that Canadians prefer majorities. The highlighted a changing shift in attitudes among the public. In 1965, a Gallup survey found that 62 percent of the public thought that minority government was a bad thing, but eight years later, 54 percent reflected that it was probably a good thing for the nation (Dufresne, Nevitte, & Blais ,

2011, p. 3). Five years later, Gallup asked if Canadians would prefer to see the next government as a majority or minority, and 64 percent said a majority, but by 1993, 51 percent said "a minority". The identified several explanations for the shift in attitude, such as partisan strategic reasons for a minor party to influence a key piece of legislation, to hold a major party to account, or to increase democratic representation.

Others have blamed the resultant minority governments on voter apathy, growing frustration with the lack of political options, and a lack of clear partisan leadership (Clarkson, 2005; LeDuc et al., 2011; Pammett & Dornan, 2004, 2006, 2008; Russell, 2008; Wells, 2007). It could also be that the Conservatives were much more able to get their constituents to come out and vote by giving them clear reasons to do so: the Liberals and New Democrats were much less able to do so, and the de-mobilization of the Liberal and NDP vote contributed significantly to the drop in voter participation.

That voter mobilization extended to fund raising. Rand Dyck (2008) noted, for instance, how the Conservative party was successful in using new election finance laws to their advantage in the 2004 election to gain an unprecedented increase in funds from individual contributors (see Table 19).

**Table 19: Individual Contributions to National Parties in 2004 (Dyck, 2008, p. 315)**

| **Party** | **Number of Contributors** | **Total Value** |
|---|---|---|
| Conservatives | 68 382 | $10 910 320 |
| NDP | 30 097 | $ 5 194 170 |
| Liberals | 17 429 | $ 4 719 388 |
| BQ | 8 775 | $ 858 746 |

Parties use election funds to secure top advertising and public relations staff that can be deployed during election campaigns to establish and solidify partisan messages, while also challenging and correcting competitors' efforts to craft differentiating agenda-setting language.

Like Dyck, Savoie's *Court Government* identified the importance of party financing and its use to fund political communication to frame media messages:

> It is no longer possible to win elections and to retain power without having a carefully worked out media strategy. This involves shaping tomorrow's news headlines, not simply reacting to them. One must always have at the ready effective sound-bites, instant rebuttal capacity, public opinion surveys, and competent media spin specialists. (Savoie, 2008, p. 159)

In terms of the media, Savoie interviewed a number of government and media specialists who described the increasing role of the media since the 1960s to the present day. Over that period, the respondents observed that a new class of political spin specialists had formed around the prime minister; Savoie explained that the importance of the media could no longer be underestimated because of these unelected advisors. However, Savoie offered no more research to support how the government used the media to fix its message, and this research project aims to address that limitation.

The analyses of Canada's previous minority governments in previous chapters showed that agenda setting by the prime minister in alliance with another party likely led to success. The contemporary period of minority governments demonstrated stark differences with past experiences in that the Conservatives under Harper did not partner with an opposition party, yet maintained power for two parliamentary periods that were longer than the average duration of past minority governments (Ferris & Voia, 2009; Russell, 2008). Instead, the Conservatives built support for their policies through a case-by-case, bill-by-bill, party-by-party agenda-setting strategy. This strategy contributed to enhancing the Prime Minister's Office even more.

Kirsten Kozolanka assessed the Harper agenda strategies of "communication by stealth" as an evolution of the Mulroney era's "policy by stealth" (Kozolanka, 2009, p.

223). She documented the Conservative party increased spending on:

1. *advertising* (e.g. in 2008, they spent $3.4 million sending out advertising for their new budget to 10% of Canadians in ridings they did have power in, while the other parties spent $4.1 million combined),

2. *polling* (e.g. $3.2 million on 548 polling contracts in 2006 alone; their first year in power),

3. and *communication staff* (e.g. in 2008: $324 million on communication, an increase of 46.1 percent since 2003).

All of these strategies were coordinated through a growing PMO. In terms of communication, the Conservative ideology of smaller government was not evident in any of this growth.

The emphasis on more strategizing demonstrates what has been called the "permanent campaign" taking root in Canada (Kozolanka, 2009, p. 223), where parties constantly use focus groups, polls, and public opinion monitoring to shape and control their messages (and agenda) in hopes of gaining electoral support for elections that could come on any loss of confidence in Parliament (see also: Elmer, 2008). Kozolanka's work described many of the tactical changes under Harper in terms of the costs and the general Conservative narrative of professionalization in communication, but she did not focus on the nuanced framing mechanisms or issue unit levels of their media messaging and agenda setting.

Haussman and Rankin (2008) focused on the issue of gender equality, demonstrating how the Harper Conservatives gained social conservative voters' support by using the language of "gender equality" to support Women's rights overseas in places like Afghanistan through charitable funding and NATO missions, while simultaneously

dismantling the funding support of left-leaning Women's groups in Canada. The balancing act allowed the Conservatives to avoid larger equality issues that had dogged them in the past in terms of abortion rights, Caucus gender balance, and gender pay equity, while framing their work as progressive.

Tom Flanagan's *Harper's Team* (2009) demonstrated the clear push towards a centralized party communication system where MPs either deferred to, or waited for, the party leader to lead all communication. Flanagan's account offered detailed instances when language was used to strategically create policies that incrementally helped Canadians move to the right politically, with the express aim to permanently entrench conservatism as a Canadian value in the electorate (Flanagan, 2009, p. 274).

The first five of his "Ten Commandments of Conservative Campaigning," for instance, offered a list of protocols that are mainly agenda-setting strategies to guide the party:

1. **Unity:** The Conservative party must retain unity among its own members and create compromises that satisfy its membership to avoid the right splitting again like it did in the 1990s.

2. **Moderation:** The Conservative party must remain moderate in its policies to attract the more left-leaning median Canadian voters.

3. **Inclusion:** The Conservative party must move beyond its Anglophone Protestant base to win national elections, and appeal to Francophones, Roman Catholics, and other minorities.

4. **Incrementalism:** The Conservative party must be willing to make progress in small steps.

5. **Policy:** The Conservative party must "develop well-thought-out policies and communicate them effectively" (Flanagan, 2009, pp. 277-283).

This strategy was set in the self-conscious context that "Canada is not yet a conservative or Conservative country; neither the philosophy of conservatism nor the party brand comes close to commanding majority support" (Flanagan, 2009, p. 274). The Conservatives understood that they would only be able to win elections because of the fragmentation of the Canadian population into "liberals, social democrats, anti-American nationalists, environmentalists, feminists, and Quebec separatists [who] are divided in their party allegiance" (Flanagan, 2009, p. 274). Flanagan argued they would have to use all tools available to coordinate their message effectively to rise above their competitors.

Flanagan's work described the frequent use of polling and focus groups to understand not just how such issues as "Canadian troops in Afghanistan" and the Quebecois Nation motion resonated with Canadians, but also how the public viewed a leader's image when bringing those issues forth. Assessing his account, it is clear that leadership skills and agenda-setting skills are intimately linked for generating support for any party's frames and policies, whether the support is to come from other parties, the media, or the public.

Behiels (2010) assessed Flanagan's work, and noted that Flanagan also mentioned the strategy of using the NDP to strategically flank the Liberals on key issues, and thereby divide the party and conquer the Liberals incrementally over time, by eventually leading to a minority government situation where the opposition parties took seats away from the Liberals (this strategy is discussed more in chapter seven). In a similar eye towards attracting voters, Marci McDonald's *The Armageddon Factor* (2010) presented the case that the Harper Conservatives courted new electoral support by forwarding socially conservative values and courting Christian fundamentalist groups, in a manner

similar to the U.S. Republican party.

The Liberal approach was different. Simpson's *The Friendly Dictatorship* (2002) and Clarkson's *The Big Red Machine* (2005) demonstrated that the Liberal professionalization of party officials came at the expense of the search for agenda-setting strategies that could be pursued through interactions with grassroots membership.

Functionally, partisan ideology marries practical electoral messaging within each new election platform as the influence of ideology, party politics, and public interests are crafted into words to strategically attract voters. Table 20 identifies the top agenda items for the governing parties of the past three federal elections based on their platform's executive summaries.

**Table 20: Federal Government Agendas 2004-2011**

| Martin Government (2004-2006) | Harper Government (2006-2008) | Harper Government (2008-2011) |
|---|---|---|
| The platform was very general and released in several documents; it included the following focal points:<br><br>> **Cities & Communities:** a "New Deal" to give cities a greater voice at the national table.<br>**> Learning:** "improved access to post-secondary education" (Liberal party, 2004).<br>**> Innovation: "**$1.25 billion of new funding for innovation, with emphasis on commercialization" (Liberal party, 2004).<br>**> Public Heath:** to create centres of excellence across Canada, and prepare emergency health systems.<br>> **Agriculture**<br>**> Sustaining our Environment**<br>**> Aboriginal People**<br>**> National Security**<br>**> International Policy** | > **Key Five Policies:**<br><br>1. Accountability.<br>2. Child care $1200 annual benefit.<br>3. Cut the Goods and Service Tax.<br>4. Patient wait times guarantees.<br>5. Tough on crime.<br><br>> **Quebec:** Opportunity to represent Canada at UNESCO.<br><br>> **Social Policy:** Against Gay marriage, guaranteed a free vote on the issue (Pammett & Dornan, 2006, pp. 13-16). | The platform was released at the last minute, and offered broader areas as compared to 2006:<br><br>> Cost of living and quality of life<br><br>> Jobs for the future<br><br>> A strong, united, independent, and free Canada<br><br>> Ensuring health and environmental well-being<br><br>> Protecting the safety and security of Canadians (Pammett & Dornan, 2006, p. 32). |

The Harper government's 2006 platform stands out among the three because it clearly

was focused on just five distinct voter promises (that the Liberals framed as “gifts”), which avoided controversial social conservative issues that had dogged the Conservatives in the past. The strict platform was a key piece of the puzzle that helped the newly united Conservative party to win the election because it attracted key segments of middle class voters who could actually understand the impact of Harper’s promised outcomes on their wallets, as compared to the broader vision proposed by the Liberals (Doern, 2005; Wells, 2007).

Clearly, agenda setting must be based on a solid understanding of the socio-political context in order to hone policy messages to attract voters. Flanagan helped explain how Harper’s team functioned to attain, maintain, and retain power from the creation of the platform through to its governing agenda.

In the broader democratic deficit narrative, the analyses and discussions of agenda-setting strategies complement Savoie’s descriptive work on the PMO’s centralization by documenting how government agendas are controlled and shifted in minority government through language starting with the platform. In short, the complexity and competitiveness of partisan government in the information age challenges political parties to be more nimble in setting policy agendas. Once in government, parties have greater power to set the agenda and can frame policy decisions about the implementation of public services to their advantage, but winning the election through an attractive platform is the first step. Moving away from brash propaganda, “agenda setting” and framing tactics became a more diplomatic, yet open for scrutiny, preferred type of strategic deployment of communication and language to ensure that a government’s policies are supported and understood by the public and the media, as well

as are viable to pass through the House.

### *Going It Alone:*
### *Running a Minority Government on the Government's Terms, not Parliament's*

Peter H. Russell's *Two Cheers for Minority Government* (2008) is useful for analyzing Martin and Harper's respective time in office and how they fulfilled their agendas. Russell's work is used here to set the context and provide the basic chronology for how the party platforms were translated into political action.

Russell's work described how, from the turn of the millennium, the Martin minority government did in fact operate with NDP support until Martin turned down two offers for their continued support in late 2005. In comparison, Harper's control tactics since coming to power were quite different from Martin's uses of the NDP.

Russell found that Harper did share some agenda priorities with the NDP, but the tactic was different from the Liberal-NDP formal partnerships of the past in that it was on a case-by-case basis:

> The Conservatives continued a mechanism devised by the Martin minority government (and damned at that time by the Conservatives) that would enable surpluses from the previous year to be spent on NDP priorities such as public transit, low-income housing, post-secondary education, and foreign aid. (Russell, 2008, p. 47)

This budgetary tactic was used effectively to maintain NDP House support, but no direct partnership was formed with the Conservatives.[11] Beyond that stratagem, Harper pushed

[11] This strategy of case-by-case policy building can be found in other countries that have a longer history of minority governments with multiple party situations, and the tactic has even been solidified into the practice of creating "agenda cartels" in places like Israel (Akirav, Cox, & McCubbins, 2010). Agenda cartels exist where common party policy groups are consistently sought out to build support for ruling government positions. A common example would be to find opposition members who are left leaning when working on social policy, but identify fiscally conservative members of opposition parties to use for support on economic matters. This practice has been used in the two party U.S. system for quite some time,

his agenda aggressively, using to his advantage the main political bullying tactic of daring the Liberals to force an election at any time, despite the national mood being against having one.

By September 2007 when Russell's work ends, Harper consistently ruled government almost like a majority government: "On every issue, it would be Harper's way or no way; defeat on any issue would be treated as a non-confidence vote" (Russell, 2008, p.57). Russell described other instances of Harper's control as well: "Harper… has done all he can as a minority government prime minister to reassert control over committee chairs. If his party were to win a majority in the House, it is difficult to see him allowing *his* MPs to make use of recent parliamentary reforms" (Russell, 2008, p. 107).

Since Martin's 2004 minority government, a change had occurred notably in the Canadian political landscape—a change that Russell's work missed discussing—in that the media and pollsters consistently described how no current national party was able to earn a nationally representative true or false majority. In other words, there was no longer a natural *long-term* ruling party for Canada in the 2004-2011 period, possibly due to the fracturing of the left with the additional parties of the Bloc Quebecois and Green party attracting votes away from the Liberals and NDP. The fragmentation led to talks of the Liberals and NDP merging in order to defeat the Conservatives after the 2006 defeat, and have since increased after the 2008 and 2011 elections.

Harper's executive style can be viewed as similar to that of John Diefenbaker's

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but there the practice instead focuses on ideological party divides; the "agenda cartel" terminology is one that reflects multiple-party policy groups more specifically. Canada's political structure is not yet at the disaggregated network structure of the multiple-party systems found in Israel or Italy, but those models of "agenda cartels" do offer one more alternative strategy to the tactics present in Dobell and Russell's reviews of minority governments.

first minority government (October 14, 1957 to February 1, 1958), which followed through on a strict agenda without partnering with other political parties.

For instance, Diefenbaker's two minority governments demonstrated how the number of seats in the house and a keen understanding of the political stream (using Kingdon's terms) were necessary for a prime minister to fulfill his or her agenda in the minority government context. In fact, some have commented that Harper's "bullying" tactics of his Cabinet and the opposition, along with his use of the national mood to focus on specific priorities, are reminiscent of Diefenbaker's first minority government where his energy and willingness to debate with opponents helped to push through his agenda (*The National Post*, 2007). Harper has often assigned other Cabinet MPs to lead the charge during debates, however with the message now filtered through the PMO, as compared to Diefenbaker's direct confrontations.

Harper himself has openly stated his admiration for Diefenbaker in a number of speeches. For example, Harper's comments from a 2007 luncheon were recorded as follows:

> No other prime minister of any stripe did more for the cause of fairness and equality and inclusion. His Bill of Rights, for example, preceded the Liberal Charter of Rights by over two decades. He extended the vote, long denied to status Indians and appointed Canada's first female Cabinet minister. Moreover, like Macdonald and Borden, he was a vigorous defender of Canadian sovereignty. (*The National Post*, 2007)

In 2008, Harper also dedicated the new northern arctic ice-breaking ships after Diefenbaker

Harper's reclamation of Diefenbaker is notable in that the two men shared a similar tenuous hold on minority government power, while attempting to maintain the strict support of their respective Cabinets, and bullying the opposition parties as if they

had a majority government. Like Harper, Diefenbaker was also an Ontario-born Westerner who viewed himself as an outsider to the Ottawa's political elite. As well, Harper and Diefenbaker are the only two evangelical Christians to have been Prime Minister (*The National Post*, 2007), and both broke decade-long Liberal holds on government.

Beyond these similarities, Harper is ideologically a Conservative, while Diefenbaker was a Red Tory. In terms of policy then, foreign policy might be the only comparative policy area that the two could be said to share, in that "traditional allies and the values of democracy and freedom" were emphasised in their agendas (*The National Post*, 2007).[12]

In contrast, Martin's minority government's control of the agenda can be viewed as closer to that of the short-lived Joe Clark (October 9, 1979 to December 14, 1979) and Arthur Meighen (June 28, 1926 to July 2, 1926) minority governments, because most of his agenda was cancelled completely with the loss of power in 2006 (e.g. the national child care plan, his generational health care fix, and the Kelowna Accord). Overall, Harper targeted message framing in the Internet age to differentiate his agenda from the other competing parties, thereby demonstrating a keen knowledge of the political stream, while controlling the policy stream. He narrowed his agenda to attract specific pockets of voter support, and built a national foundation for the Conservatives to come to power by placing the leader over his

[12] Until 2011, Harper had yet to follow Diefenbaker in gaining a majority government by strategically using minority government success to build support with the electorate.

party to direct his parliamentary agenda.[13] Savoie might say that Harper had come to rule as a king, completing the project started under Trudeau (and indeed he did when consulted in a *Winnipeg Free Press* article by Frances Russell: see November 16, 2011).

## II. Agenda-setting Issues and the Party Platform Frames Online 2004-2008

In framing research, the platform is considered in terms of its effects on the campaign and the larger party mandate once in power. For instance, Mendelsohn (1998) using traditional content analysis methods to track, codify, and analyze five standard media narratives for conferring government mandates in the coverage of six different Canadian provincial elections. The five standard narratives he used to categorize the messages included mandates conferred based on ideology, leadership, rejection of a failed government, generalized voter unrest, and successful campaign strategies (Mendelsohn, 1998, p. 243). Clarke's *Absent Mandate* (1984) first identified these five narratives that the media use to frame political mandates and explain election wins. The platform was viewed in these works as a part of the party's overall attempts to frame their message and eventual mandates within a single document's consistent narrative.

Mendelsohn identified several trends in the data that would require further research to verify any possible normative developments in terms of the narratives as limiting framing devices. For example, if a new leader was facing his first election contest, Mendelsohn found it was more likely that a win would result in the media framing that his personal popularity was the reason. Also, media interpretations for the

[13] After the 2008 election, he would also prorogue parliament twice to such down the possibility of a Coalition Government and to stop debate of Afghani prisoner abuses. This use of power is discussed more in chapter nine.

left and right were different in that social democratic victories were framed as "fortuitous" based on the electorate being restless, while Conservative wins were framed as prospective in that the mandate was deemed "reasonable" by a public seeking stability. Mendelsohn did not follow the agendas of governments after the election periods to understand how their mandate affected their governing style or continued messaging.

Generally, Mendelsohn found in his sample that due to the Canadian news media's "instant analyses" the tendency to impose "timely and coherent narratives on complex events" led to three main outcomes:

1. The news media usually depoliticized the public sphere by attributing election results to nonideological factors (e.g. leadership, rejection of a failed government, generalized voter unrest, or campaign strategy).

2. The media avoided "objective" criteria such as public opinion surveys to determine the electorate's motivations.

3. The media quickly and almost unanimously settled on one narrative to explain each election result to simplify the task of reporting. (Mendelsohn, 1998, p. 240)

He argued that because these patterns emerged in the samples of provincial coverage, party strategists' abilities to frame and impose narratives were seriously constrained.

Two works in Sampert and Trimble's *Mediating Canadian Politics* (2010) described the media background to the power transition from the Liberals to the Conservatives. First, Christopher Adams's "Polling in Canada: Calling the Election" (2010) presented the overall transformation in Canadian polling from its start in 1941, when the U.S. Gallup organization first announced that 27 Canadian newspapers would carry its surveys (Adams, 2010, p. 155). Adams described how Canadians had become accustomed to reading polls in the newspapers by the 1960s, but its predominant use in

politics was limited into the 1970s because of its exorbitant costs and the lack of computers and telecommunication sophistication to support the quick capture of public sentiment.

Martin Goldfarb notably was secured by the Liberals in 1972 to conduct daily national polls two weeks into the election (a unique first in terms of frequency), while Allan Gregg's Decima Research built its name off being secured to help Joe Clark's campaign to a win in 1979. Gregg was secured by the Conservatives through to the end of the Mulroney era. With the advent of personal computers and the Internet, polling contracts are now very competitive and rewarded on merit, where the political party expects their payment to win strategic advantage, whereas previously "the victorious party reaped rewards for their pollsters" (Adams, 2010, p. 159). The latter was the case with Goldfarb in the 1970s and Gregg in the 1980s.

Each party now spends millions of dollars to secure firms, and the senior pollster of each firm is now the face of authority paid to deal with the media interpretations (or spin) of the polls in the "permanent campaign" news cycle. Adams noted that since the Reform party days, the Conservative party had shared resources with the U.S. Republicans, specifically the consultant Frank Luntz since the 2006 election, to help frame controversial issues like the environment or other social conservative wedge issues (e.g. Kozolanka, 2009; McDonald, 2010).

Soroka and Andrew's work in *Mediating Canadian Politics* (2010) provides a second important background to the minority government election campaigns. They focused on a content analysis of media coverage of the 2004 and 2006 elections. They found two consistent elements in their media analysis: (i) that in the 2006 race media

focused more on policy issues than the horse race as compared to 2004 (55 percent of articles in 2004, but only 45 percent in 2006), and (ii) that negative media far outweighed positive stories, increasing in each consecutive election. They noted that the 2006 election became about ideas and ideological values (as opposed to dominant issues like the economy or health care), with the media reflecting the nuanced criticism of the partisan platforms during the volatile minority government era, rather than just focusing on the campaigns and the leader, stating that "policy platforms, above and beyond the government accountability issue, were not just on the table during the 2006 campaign; they actually took up much of the space there, particularly in the early weeks of the campaign" (Soroka & Andrew, 2010, p. 113).

What were the key issues in the party platforms that made values so important, specifically middle class family values? Soroka and Andrew's study identified the top issues in their coding schema simply by focusing on the first issues mentioned in each story, so their study does not include multiple issues mentioned in an article. Table 21 below includes their complete list of top issues found in the media for the key 2006 election from their sample of 4255 articles.

| Table 21: Leading Media Issues for the 2006 Election | |
|---|---|
| **Issue** | **Percentage of Coverage in 2006** |
| ***Process Issues*** | |
| Sponsorship Scandal, Income Trusts | 7.9 |
| Government/Leadership | 3.5 |
| TOTAL | 11.5 |
| ***Policy Issues*** | |
| Constitution, National Unity/Separatism | 8.9 |
| International Affairs/Defence | 5.7 |
| Social Issues/Programs | 5.0 |
| Taxes | 4.8 |
| Crime | 4.7 |
| Healthcare | 4.0 |
| Economy, Unemployment, Inflation, Trade & Economy | 3.8 |
| Same-sex Marriage | 3.4 |
| Democratic Reform/Turnout | 3.0 |
| Environmental Issues | 2.9 |
| Immigration, Multiculturalism, Racism/Discrimination | 2.7 |
| Intergovernmental Relations | 2.1 |
| Deficit/Government Spending/Fiscal Responsibility | 1.9 |
| Education | 0.8 |
| **Source:** (Soroka & Andrew, 2010, p. 188) | |

They found that in terms of issues the "sponsorship scandal dominated in 2004, and accountability re-emerged as the most salient issue of the 2006 campaign's second half, aided by news that the RCMP was launching an investigation into a Liberal government decision on income trusts" (Soroka & Andrew, 2010, p. 117). These results from the key 2006 election can now be used for a comparison with the platform issues.

In 2011, Flynn demonstrated that incumbent majority governments, and even stable minorities, indeed have the capacity to fulfill many of their election platform promises. He studied the election platforms in Canada from 1984 to 2008, and compared them to the actions taken by parties while governing to fulfil the election commitments. He found that the parties were unrestrained in their abilities to advance policies through the platform, and therefore, the party's policy-making capacity was fairly advanced in that represent document, especially when granted a majority to translate it into policy. In other words, platforms are a very important piece of formulating the government's later

agenda.

Since 2004, the platform has consistently been delivered as a locked PDF document on party websites. Like other traditional party content, their e-delivery is not regulated in any way as of yet, with professional norms having developed organically among the parties. In her "Regulating Canadian Elections in the Digital Age: Approaches and Concerns" (2009), Small described how the partisan uses of the Internet were not regulated in Canada because of CRTC standards that attempted to keep the Internet as an open medium, as compared to television and radio's closed channel system. She argued that regulation should be created based on balancing the concerns of egalitarianism and transparency for all parties, similar to the laws governing the other media that the CRTC regulates, especially concerning paid party advertisements. The platform was considered as a general part of all party communications online in her recommendations.

In the next section, the platform is viewed as the document that guides the coordinated messaging of the entire election campaign.

## III. Methodology: Agenda-setting and Frames Analysis through "Issue Units"

The issue networks methodology that is used in this chapter was described previously in chapter one. The method can be reiterated simply as follows: issue units (or, words representing issues) are counted using automated concordance software to analyze the partisan issues contained in digital objects like party platforms, splash pages (also known as the home page of the party websites), and newsfeeds.[14] The method for creating coefficients for the tracked issue units is summarized in the following formula [$x_i = \Sigma_i$ /

[14] See Rockwell's "What is Textual Analysis?" (2005) for more information about automated textual analysis methods and software.

n], where "$x_i$" represents the coefficient calculated by dividing "$\Sigma_i$", the sum for each issue unit, by "n", the total frequency of all words in the sample document.

Salience is measured through the highest coefficient values representing the most frequent issues in a set of issues: $\{x_i, x_{ii}, x_{iii}, \ldots\}$. The top salient issues are selected and tracked to create a basket of issues by the fact they are the top issues in each partisan document, created by the political parties themselves. Using this method, the issues words from political documents in the selected samples could be plotted in terms of their partisan rise and fall over the selected periods of time.

By way of example, the method can be demonstrated quickly and easily by viewing Table 22 below. Simple word counts for the most frequently used words in the three English-speaking political party platforms during the 2004 election are presented in Table 22. The total relative frequency for the top single words (or "issue units") recorded in Table 22 can be calculated at 2.88% for the Conservatives, 2.24% for the Liberals, and 2.42% for the NDP samples, roughly the top 2-3% of words in the sample that includes extraneous words like articles, connectives, verbs, and prepositions. In similar research, the top 30-40% of repeating key words can be identified using the automated concordance tool when some 300 common "stop words" (i.e. articles, connectives, and prepositions) are removed, thereby focusing the sample on the top key issue words that are repeated.

If we assume the parties are not trying to bury their platform messages, following best practices in political communication, then the top repetitive frames and agenda issues they are espousing can quickly be identified in data samples of pertinent informational objects, like platforms, websites, Throne Speeches, prime ministerial

speeches, and *Hansard*.

The method allows researchers to document and record the prevalence of the top key issues selected by each political party, through either tracking single words, couplets, and repeating phrases (see Table 22 below). The method can also be used in other digital documents to start to track the same words, including the repetitive uses of rhetoric in Throne Speeches, the media, and *Hansard*, to understand which linguistic frames dominated the discourse. Once a word is identified, like the "GST" (i.e. the Goods and Service Tax") that the Harper government used twice in 2004, for example, then other techniques can be used to understand what context the word is used in (in this case, their frame was obviously "cut the GST").

Other interesting exploratory leads can similarly be found in the information in Table 22. For example, the frequency in use of the party brand, the party leader's name, and the key election issues like "accountability" can be compared to see how the party's differentiated their platforms from the competitors, following the voter choice model. Each of these data points represents a framing decision made by party strategists during the campaign, and they are analyzed in more detail below. Other tools like polling and electoral results are required to understand what effect such frames had on the public's imagination and to present the clear picture of how framing can be used to set the national agenda.

Automated methods may one day be able to track all issues immediately as they are posted online, but first the method has to be developed, used consistently, and demonstrated in terms of its significance. The issue networks method is similar to other research on market hype (e.g. the Gartner Group's Hype Cycle), government speeches

(Dutil, Ryan & Gossignac, 2011), and citation analyses (e.g. Cukier et al., 2009; Shiller, 2000) that demonstrates there are strong correlations between the market values and media rhetoric, but no direct causal connections have been established in that research. Similarly, this dissertation challenges attempts to create predictive models for rhetoric analysis, political or otherwise (e.g. Soroka, 2002), because at best researchers can measure salience, but the direction of agenda-setting trends cannot be predicted mathematically. For example, even if an issue appears in the media first (or in a platform or on a political website), its appearance does not mean that particular media item set the agenda (e.g. an action might appear casual if a recession develops and the media describes it first, and then the government acts to respond to it).

Governments continually check with private, public, and non-profit actors (e.g. Banks, Corporations, NGOs, the media, etc.), so it is difficult to reduce complex events to one cause based on rhetoric captured in documents, let alone to create predictive models of irrational shifts in markets or public sentiment. As Rogers (2004) argued, each issue brings together actors in dynamic ways, with complex implications; one day's topical issue could be off the agenda if a new issue is sensationalized in the media, or comes to be pushed by a majority of influential actors. At best, the issue network method can describe the data captured at a particular point of time to provide historical evidence, and from data analyzed over time, establish trends upon which to make the best decisions.

The method has been used elsewhere in "issue network" tracking, where a rhetorical term like "environmentalism," "election," or "gun control" is used to identify actors in association to one another in a stable object of investigation (e.g. hyperlinks,

web pages, or databases).[15] In this dissertation, the use of the HyperPo software application allowed for a descriptive textual analysis, rather than a traditional Aristotelian content analysis method, which instead requires the initial steps of categorizing, coding, and classifying information based on the object of research. In other words, this study creates a "bag" of issues by allowing the texts to speak for themselves using newer online tools like HyperPo to track the words as issue units.

### *The 2004 Election Platforms*

In 2004, the incumbent Liberal government's platform was entitled "Moving Canada Forward" and filled 58 pages, the longest of the major party platforms. The Liberals decided to frame their platform in terms of accountable governing and social issues because the economy was relatively stable and government finances were balanced. The first section of the platform focused on changing the "democratic deficit" in Ottawa, which was the Liberal party's attempt to re-situate the Sponsorship Program within a larger governance frame, rather than as a Liberal party specific problem. The strategy included not directly discussing the Sponsorship Program until page seven of the platform, thereby deeply embedding it within the larger democratic deficit narrative. The democratic deficit agenda included reforms to Parliament to increase MPs' free votes, the creation of an independent Ethics Commissioner, adding whistle blower protections, and introducing accountability measures on spending.

[15] Private firms like Nexology in Canada and Morningside Analytics in the U.S. were using similar methods as this dissertation to track online political rhetoric by the time of completion of this dissertation. As well, the members of Ryerson University's Infoscape Research Lab continued to employ similar methods for their research (one of whom now works at Nexology; see for example, the Infoscape Research Lab's "Blogometer", 2010). U.S. government spy agencies have also notably developed automated textual analysis software with private sector actors to flag key words in texts, telephone conversations, and understand possible threats to security (e.g. Gorman, 2009).

The second section of the platform focused on an eleven point summary of the Liberals' social agenda, followed by an extended section on the goal of fixing health care for a generation. In other words, Paul Martin's strongest agenda achievements to date, mainly his management of the economy in the post 9/11 world, did not lead the Liberal frame in the 2004 platform; instead his team chose to lead with their weakest issue in terms of the democratic deficit/Sponsorship Program and a social issue agenda. Table 22 presents this clearly in terms of summarizing the top issue units and frequencies captured in the key word analyses of the three party's platforms. Table 22 provides both the raw frequency score for each issue (or key word frame) along with its calculated coefficient.

Based on simple word counts, the top Liberal issues identified in Table 22 were "health care", "waiting times", "early learning", and "child care", all of which were discussed more in the Liberal platform than Paul Martin, the Prime Minister himself. To note, all issue unit counts in Table 22 are exact for each word, couplet, or phrase, based on the HyperPo concordance tool's frequency capabilities. In other words, no synonyms were used to calculate the results above, so for example the Liberal issue unit of "health care" appears exactly 54 times in the platform.

| Table 22: Top 10 Issue Items in the 2004 Platforms | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | | **Liberals** | | **NDP** | |
| **Pages: 44**<br>**Words (Tokens): 12467**<br>**Unique (Types): 2227** | | **Pages: 58**<br>**Words (Tokens): 18061**<br>**Unique (Types): 2951** | | **Pages: 15**<br>**Words (Tokens): 3813**<br>**Unique (Types): 1239** | |
| **Issue** | **Frequency** | **Issue** | **Frequency** | **Issue** | **Frequency** |
| conservative government | 75 (0.0060) | liberal government | 78 (0.0043) | health care | 16 (0.0042) |
| demand better | 59 (0.0047) | health care | 54 (0.0030) | Jack Layton | 14 (0.0037) |
| health care | 44 (0.0035) | waiting times | 30 (0.0017) | Canada's NDP | 13 (0.0034) |
| Stephen Harper | 44 (0.0035) | economy | 28 (0.0016) | public health care | 8 (0.0021) |
| The liberals | 24 (0.0019) | early learning | 26 (0.0014) | Paul Martin and the liberals | 7 (0.0018) |
| health accord | 18 (0.0014) | child care | 22 (0.0012) | toxic waste | 6 (0.0016) |
| Paul Martin | 18 (0.0014) | Paul Martin | 19 (0.0011) | clean up | 5 (0.0013) |
| auditor general | 17 (0.0014) | prime minister | 18 (0.0010) | clean water | 5 (0.0013) |
| the prime minister | 11 (0.0009) | new deal (for Cities and Communities) | 10 (0.0006) | create jobs | 5 (0.0013) |
| better accountability | 10 (0.0008) | wind power | 10 (0.0006) | crown corporation | 4 (0.0010) |
| demand a better economy | 9 (0.0007) | low income (housing) | 9 (0.0005) | first nations | 4 (0.0010) |
| ethics commissioner | 8 (0.0006) | 21st century economy | 8 (0.005) | green cars | 4 (0.0010) |
| lower taxes | 7 (0.0006) | aboriginal people | 7 (0.0004) | economy | 2 (0.0005) |
| Crime | 2 (0.0004) | conservative | 0 | accountability | 0 |
| cut the GST | 2 (0.0004) | Harper | 0 | auditor general | 0 |
| Aboriginal | 2 (0.0002) | Layton | 0 | Gomery | 0 |
| Immigrants | 2 (0.0002) | NDP (democrat not used) | 0 | Harper | 0 |
| Women | 2 (0.0002) | Gomery | 0 | immigrants | 0 |
| Gomery | 0 | accountability | 0 | prime minister | 0 |
| Layton | 0 | immigrants | 0 | women | 0 |
| NDP | 0 | women | 0 | | |
| **NOTE:** The relative frequency appears as the coefficient in parentheses. The coefficient is calculated, as was described above in the methodology section, using the following formula: [$x_i = \Sigma_i / n$]. | | | | | |

In Table 22 above, the Conservative attack is clear in terms of targeting the "Liberals" and "Paul Martin", as both are among the top issue units discussed. The Conservatives platform was titled "Demanding Better" (2004), and it targeted the Liberal record in the very first paragraph calling it "ten years of waste, mismanagement, scandal, and democratic deficit." The Conservatives promised to create a new direction for

Canada focusing on "greater accountability, a secure health care system, lower taxes, and a more vibrant economy."

In their introduction, the party was placed before the leader in terms of framing their platform through the lens of accountability, but in reality Stephen Harper's name was mentioned 44 times in the document, which was more frequently than the other two leaders' names combined. The Conservative document clearly used a repetitive framing strategy stating "demand better" 59 times, and emphasizing the party leader's leadership qualities by repeating 43 times "a conservative government led by Stephen Harper will…" as an opening to declare each of their top agenda items, in contrast with the Liberal position. Health care wait times came second on their platform, making it the dominant social issue in the election shared by the two parties leading in the polls.

In 2004, the NDP released two platforms under their new leader Jack Layton. The NDP in this election was, overall, still mainly considered the fourth party behind the Bloc that could never gain a majority in government. This would change over the 2004-2011 period, with the NDP winning more seats in each consecutive election. In 2004, they attempted to take votes mainly from the Liberals through the platform wording. They did so in their first platform release by trumpeting the traditional NDP strength of Health Care based on Tommy Douglas's legacy. The first five-page Health Care document was titled "New Energy. A Positive Change."

The second 10-page document came out a week later and focused on the environment, with the NDP banking on a critical mass of Canadians voting green in the 2004 election, and making an attempt to court the youth vote. They targeted Paul Martin and the Liberals as taking Canada in the wrong direction on these top issues, choosing to

ignore the Harper Conservatives in their attacks. Significantly, the NDP also missed the opportunity in their platforms to target Martin on accountability and the Sponsorship Program as the Conservatives did.

### *Analysis and Discussion: The 2004 Platforms*

The important pattern to note in Table 22 above is that both the Conservatives and Liberals shared the election issues of "accountability", "the economy", and "health care", while the Liberals and NDP shared a focus on the "environment". The pattern is important to highlight in terms of issue differentiation following the updated Kingdon and voter choice models, because the top issues did not clearly differentiate the two parties in the 2004 election when we simply use textual analysis as a measure. This notable finding changes in comparison to the Conservatives' 2006 platform below.

In 2004, the Liberal platform would lead to Martin's minority, in which he created broad policies that some argued were designed to buy votes. Policies like the Liberals' new deal for Canada's major cities, a national childcare program, and the Kelowna Aboriginal accord were viewed as promising too much for some Canadians. The Conservatives challenged that the Liberal policies were out of step for many Canadians who saw the Liberal dynasty as a threat to democracy, and began supporting the attacks on accountability that were fostered by both the Conservatives and the NDP in light of the Sponsorship Program and Gomery Commission. Most accounts supported that the Liberals' agenda was unfocused in 2004, but they remained in power because of the NDP support and polls that demonstrated Canadians were fearful of the social conservative policies of the newly formed Harper Conservatives.

In other words, the Conservatives had not framed their agenda in a way that could secure a substantial growth in votes by attracting new segments of the voting public. They did not present the better option to Canadians that would lead to a majority, but something was happening as the Liberal majority ended. In the context of Flynn and Behiels' works, the overlapping agendas in terms of the Liberals and NDPs focusing on environmental issues (as in Table 22 above), while the Conservatives began their first rally on the accountability issue, led to both opposition parties taking votes and seats away from the Liberals. The flanking attack had begun.

In his *Right Side Up* (2007), journalist Paul Wells (2007) described the most commonly held view that Martin strictly controlled the Liberal agenda, and therefore, the blame for the loss of a Liberal majority in 2004 rested solely on his poor campaign and lack of leadership skills for communicating key issues. In particular, Wells identified how Martin lost all of the Liberal support in the Western provinces where the Conservatives had established a stronghold following from their gains made during their pre-party merger Canadian Alliance/Reform party days. As well, the Liberals were losing support in strongholds like Ontario, where many rural areas had turned to the Conservatives.

Wells described how Martin first presented himself as a strong, decisive leader in 2003 when he was sworn in as Chrétien's replacement. In a *Maclean*'s interview at the time, Martin described his agenda-setting style as being "team oriented", following directly from his own strong and clear leadership goals:

> I'm surrounded by very good people. That's the first thing. The second thing is, you come into this with very strong convictions and a context: this is how I see the world, this is how I see the country, this how I see the priorities, and this is what I want to do, short, medium, and long term. The decisions flow almost automatically. (Wells, 2007, p. 210)

In fact, Martin's tenure as prime minister was not successful in terms of completing his agenda "automatically" or using his team to fulfill his goals. Wells noted that even after being chastened with the minority government results in the 2004 election campaign: "Martin told reporters he wasn't contemplating changes, in many ways he was telling it to us straight. He made few personnel changes at the Prime Minister's Office, and the changes he did make had the effect of reinforcing his permanent campaign team's hold on the PMO" (Wells, 2007, p. 131).

Wells believed Martin's decision to retain the group that helped take him to minority government status was one factor that led to Harper's rise in the 2006 election. For example, Wells noted one key issue during the election campaign was Martin's team's inability to effectively deal with the media:

> When Martin became prime minister in 2003, the Martinites had enjoyed a reputation as media-relations pros. Now they couldn't catch a break. It showed on camera. Reporters and non-combatants couldn't stop talking about how heated, tense, urgent, and humourless the designated Liberal spokespeople were. (Wells, 2007, p. 224)

Other factors Wells cited in Liberals' fall included: (i) Martin's lack of impact in creating counter frames to Harper's branding the Liberals as having no clear agenda, and (ii) the frequent attacks on Martin's lack of leadership acumen at the head of his weakened, disorganized team.

Pammett and Dornan described how since the 2000 election government agendas and platforms had shifted from economics to the social policy agenda, mainly because the economy was viewed to be stable and the government had consistently been paying down debt under Paul Martin's budgets, while also maintaining surpluses (Pammett & Dornan, 2004; 2006). Martin, however, was criticized for missing the chance to play to his

strengths as financial steward, while being too unfocused and lacking leadership skills on communicating his social policies during the 2004 and 2006 election.

Overall, Martin's major agenda items of creating a national Child Care program, solving Health Care "for a generation", stabilizing asymmetrical transfer payments to the provinces, and implementing the Kelowna Accord were all stopped when the Harper Conservatives came to power in 2006.

### *The 2006 Election Platforms*

The Martin Liberal minority government fell on November 28, 2005, by a wide margin of 171 to 133 votes, when the Bloc Quebecois and NDP supported a Conservative-led non-confidence vote. The vote followed after the Liberals notably turned down two offers from the NDP to continue their partnership if the Liberals supported a ban on private medical clinics (Pammet & Dornan, 2004).

In the ensuing election, the Conservatives' presented a shortened 25-page platform, "Stand Up for Canada". The platform was structured by repeating "Stand Up for Accountability, Opportunity, Security, Families, Our Communities, and Canada" at the start of each new section to highlight their five key priorities. In Table 23 below, the salient Conservative issues stand out from their competitors' platforms in terms of their top five key priorities: "accountability", the child care "tax credit", "tough on crime", cutting "the gst", and supporting "families" being clearly identified. This change was the most notable of the three party's platforms, because of its strict five point structure framed voters' perceptions and attract the key segment of middle class families.

| Table 23: Top 10 Issue Items in the 2006 Platforms | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | | **Liberals** | | **NDP** | |
| **Pages: 25**<br>**Words (Tokens): 11572**<br>**Unique (Types): 2332** | | **Pages: 85**<br>**Words (Tokens): 30338**<br>**Unique (Types): 3834** | | **Pages: 52**<br>**Words (Tokens): 15539**<br>**Unique (Types): 3007** | |
| **Issue** | **Frequency** | **Issue** | **Frequency** | **Issue** | **Frequency** |
| conservative government | 77 (0.0067) | liberal government | 162 (0.0053) | The NDP | 64 (0.0041) |
| liberals | 30 (0.0026) | martin government | 54 (0.0018) | health care | 48 (0.0031) |
| stand up for Canada | 27 (0.0023) | securing Canada's success | 45 (0.0015) | Jack Layton | 47 (0.0030) |
| accountability | 24 (0.0021) | health care | 42 (0.0014) | getting results for people | 24 (0.0015) |
| families | 18 (0.0016) | Paul Martin | 40 (0.0013) | seniors | 24 (0.0015) |
| crime | 17 (0.0015) | economy | 36 (0.0012) | economy | 19 (0.0012) |
| auditor general | 12 (0.0010) | family | 34 (0.0011) | child care | 17 (0.0011) |
| child care | 12 (0.0010) | climate change | 26 (0.0009) | tax cuts | 14 (0.0009) |
| clean up | 11 (0.0010) | early learning | 21 (0.0007) | first nations Métis and Inuit | 13 (0.0008) |
| work with the provinces | 11 (0.0010) | child care | 20 (0.0007) | liberal government | 13 (0.0008) |
| ethics commissioner | 8 (0.0007) | demographic challenge | 16 (0.0005) | Jack Layton and the NDP will work to | 12 (0.0008) |
| health care | 8 (0.0007) | public health care | 15 (0.0005) | education and training | 11 (0.0007) |
| national security | 8 (0.0007) | aboriginal Canadians | 14 (0.0005) | home care | 11 (0.0007) |
| public prosecutions | 8 (0.0007) | succeeding in a new world of giants | 14 (0.0005) | long term care | 9 (0.0006) |
| tax credit | 8 (0.0007) | provinces and territories | 14 (0.0005) | post secondary education | 9 (0.0006) |
| young people | 8 (0.0007) | cities and communities | 13 (0.0004) | affordable housing | 8 (0.0005) |
| economy | 7 (0.0006) | post secondary education | 13 (0.0004) | Paul Martin | 8 (0.0005) |
| softwood lumber | 7 (0.0006) | prime minister | 12 (0.0004) | skills training | 8 (0.0005) |
| prime minister | 4 (0.0003) | action plan | 12 (0.0004) | young people | 8 (0.0005) |
| GST | 4 (0.0003) | human rights | 11 (0.0004) | the environment | 4 (0.0003) |
| Gomery | 3 (0.0003) | new deal | 11 (0.0004) | Gomery | 4 (0.0003) |
| Stephen Harper | 3 (0.0003) | tax cuts | 11 (0.0004) | prime minister | 4 (0.0003) |
| a cleaner healthier environment | 2 (0.0002) | Gomery | 5 (0.0002) | climate change | 2 (0.0001) |
| arts culture and competitive sports | 2 (0.0002) | Conservatives | 1 (0.0001) | Mr. Harper | 2 (0.0001) |
| NDP | 2 (0.0002) | Stephen Harper | 0 | | |
| Layton | 0 | Layton / NDP | 0 | | |

Table 23 also identifies how, unlike the 2004 campaign, Stephen Harper's name only appears three times in the document, placing the party brand first among the top issue units tracked. This change could have occurred to re-cast Harper as less power-hungry for a majority government, an image of him often portrayed in the media. As in 2004, the Conservatives solely focused their attack on the Liberals (30 mentions) and Paul Martin (mentioned 10 times). The Conservative document also started again by focusing on accountability measures, but this time it was armed with the Auditor General's report and the Gomery Commission's findings, which would be used as a push for Harper's eventual Accountability Act. The Conservatives attacked the Liberals predominantly on the issue of accountability (24 mentions) in the first section of their platform.

Table 24 demonstrates HyperPo's Key Word In Context (KWIC) analysis of the "clean up" language identified above in the Conservative platform. The KWIC analysis identifies a limited number of words before and after the selected phrase (in this case five words on each side).

**Table 24: KWIC of "clean up"**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| priorities are clear. We will | clean | up government, cut the GST |
| ..... Make qualified government appointments ..... | Clean | up government polling and advertising |
| up government polling and advertising..... | Clean | up the procurement of government |
| despite Paul Martin□s promises to | clean | up Ottawa, the scandals just |
| Act, a sweeping plan to | clean | up government. Stand up for |
| despite Paul Martin□s promises to | clean | up Ottawa, the scandals just |
| Act, a sweeping plan to | clean | up government. g of federal |
| firms from monopolizing government business. | Clean | up the procurement of government |
| build roads and improve infrastructure, | clean | up the environment, and strengthen |
| build roads and improve infrastructure, | clean | up the environment, and strengthen |
| they have done nothing to | clean | up the environment here in |
| ensure water quality and quantity. □ | Clean | up federal contaminated sites and |
| encourage the private sector to | clean | up brownfields. □ Require percent average |

This type of analysis helped to identify that the repetitive "clean up" framing language was obviously linked to the Liberals' Sponsorship Program and the accountability issue, not an environmental issue (as the Liberals and NDP language reflected through "climate change"). Similarly, the KWIC tool was used to identify that the "tax credits" (8

mentions) being offered by the Conservatives ranged across strategic voter segments: an "Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit", a "Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED)" tax credit, the child care tax credit for parents, a home renovation tax credit, a physical fitness tax credit for kids programs, and a public transit rider tax credit. In this way, the HyperPo tool helped to identify another key shift in the Conservatives 2006 platform.

In contrast, the Liberals' platform focused on "tax cuts" (11 mentions), while it delayed its discussion the Gomery report until page 76. The Liberals' "Securing Canada's Success" was a massive document at 85 pages. Martin ran on his successful economic record in the 2006 platform, and the Liberals also focused on the changing demographics in Canada from the impending retirement of the Baby Boomers that would affect the economy, health care, and immigration. Beyond those main changes from 2004, Table 23 demonstrated that Liberal platform repeated many of the same issues and frames as their previous campaign. The Liberals also chose not to target the two other national parties in their platform.

The 52-page NDP platform was titled "Jack Layton Getting Results for People" (2006). The NDP primarily targeted the Liberals by addressing corporate tax cuts, funding education, fixing health care issues, and tackling environmental "climate change". The Liberals also discussed "climate change", whereas the Conservatives framed the environment in terms of a "cleaner healthier environment"; this issue would come to a head in the 2008 election under the Dion green shift. The NDP also targeted the Harper Conservatives in the 2006 platform, realizing they were a rising competitor after the 33 seat gain from the former Canadian Alliance's previous 66 seats in 2000.

***Analysis and Discussion: The 2006 Platforms***

The shortened Conservative platform was used to keep the party in step with Harper on the campaign trail. It also allowed the Conservatives to differentiate their agenda from the Liberals and NDP because they shared fewer issues with their competitors. For example, the Conservative issue units in 2004 that would rise higher in the 2006 campaign included "crime", which came up only twice in 2004, and "cutting the GST", mentioned only four times in the 2004 platform. As others have noted (Adams, 2010; Kozolanka, 2009; McDonald, 2010), the Conservatives' top issues reflect U.S. Republican style tactics championed by Karl Rove and Frank Luntz, where key messages are repeated often to frame public perceptions, agendas are strictly framed to fend off attacks, and issues like crime and "national security" (8 mentions) are used hawkishly to retain their base, while being narrow cast towards voters in key battleground ridings.

Neither the Liberals nor NDP had any clear hawkish issues, but they did share far more top issues as compared to the Conservatives in their platforms (e.g. health care, the economy, child care, post-secondary education, Aboriginals, and climate change). The Liberals vague focus was also reflected in the length of their platform. There is plenty of research to support these interpretations. In the 2006 election, Wells (2007) described the Liberals as the self-assured campaign professionals going into the horse race, but something new had changed by 2006: the Conservatives were learning new tactics too.

Wells stated that the Liberals already dominated in using regional tactics based on demographic tracking and mobilizing its base. The Conservatives, however, began using similar campaign tactics by 2006 under Patrick Muttart [the Conservative Campaign Leader]:

> the map they stuck their flag pins into was a map of income brackets and lifestyle choices, not provinces and cities. Every party has a list of ridings it can hold, ridings it can hope to steal from rivals, and ridings that are beyond hope. Similarly, Patrick Muttart had done extensive polling to determine who voted Conservative, who might be persuaded to, and who would not be worth the wasted breath. Again, it's possible to overstate the novelty that Muttart's work represented. The Conservatives did not have a monopoly on this sort of sophisticated market research. It's closer to the truth, in fact, to say that for the first time since the late 1980s they were no longer letting the Liberals have the monopoly by default. (Wells, 2007, p. 213)

According to Wells, the strong Conservative control of voter directed messaging in the 2006 campaign was only new in the fact that they had not been effectively matching the Liberals' uses of it for framing messages and agenda setting before that time. The emergence of Harper and his unified right-wing alternative to the long governing center-left Liberals in Canada occurred during a seismic shift in the electoral landscape, following a Conservative campaign that, like others, Wells noted used comparable language to that of Bush's Republicans (Wells, 2007).

In contrast to Martin's leadership, Harper's rise to power can be attributed to his team's adept abilities to manage their agenda and communicate their messages consistently and effectively over that of their competitors. For example, the Harper team used one of Martin's own leadership statements against the Liberal party during the 2006 election campaign. The Conservatives created an attack advertisement based on a proclamation that Martin had previously stated, "If you have 40 priorities, you don't have any" (Wells, 2007, p. 211). During the election campaign, the Conservatives added a list of fifty-six subjects Martin had discussed as being included on the Liberal agenda underneath the quote to illustrate Martin's point.

Wells contrasted the embattled Liberals' media campaign with the Tory's developing savvy in the election:

> In the Tory war room […] a sign hung in plain sight of all staffers who had to deal with reporters on the telephone. It reminded them of their obligations to proper phone etiquette. The four questions they should never stop asking themselves were:
>
> 1) What are we accomplishing with this? (That is, were they accomplishing political goals when they said something, or simply making themselves feel better?)
>
> 2) Are we debating on our ground or theirs? (Were they talking about what *they* wanted to talk about, or what *Liberals* wanted to talk about?)
>
> 3) Are we taking their bait? (The second rule restated, for emphasis.)
>
> 4) Is our tone neutral? (Wells, 2007, p. 225)

Along with the new processes to stay on message, the Harper team came up with their "Five Priorities" list to present a clear contrast to Martin's ever-growing agenda. The Five Priorities, as was listed above, focused on (i) improved government accountability, (ii) a Child Care $1200 annual benefit for parents, (iii) a promise to cut the Goods and Service Tax by 2%, (iv) a Health Care patient wait times guarantee, and (v) a tough on crime agenda to increase prison terms for violent offenders. The Five Priorities idea followed the Newt Gingrich "Contract With America" model that clearly stated his agenda so the competition could not create wild stories or media frames that would detract from the Republican's campaign.

Wells attributed these successful changes to the efforts of Harper's campaign strategist, Patrick Muttart. Wells met Muttart for the first time in person after the 2006 campaign. When Wells asked if he was looking forward to a break from the election, Muttart stated he was already working on the election post-mortem and other continuing projects for the next one. Muttart's use of demographic messaging notably brought disillusioned Liberal Catholics over to support the Tories in 2006; this support led to their

minority win. He described Muttart's success as follows:

> shortly after the 2006 election, one or two Liberals from the Martin camp grumbled that I had made the young Tory strategist look like a genius for doing what any modern, professional campaign team does: use market research and comparative politics to identify and attract classes of voters whose support for other parties isn't absolutely nailed down. To my surprise, Tories who have worked closely with Muttart agreed. There was, indeed, nothing tremendously novel or insightful in the contribution Muttart made to Harper's team. The only difference was that nobody had ever made such a contribution before. (Wells, 2007, p. 157)

Muttart's main role was to professionalize the Conservative party, so that they could equal and surpass the Liberals in terms of political communication tactics. The efforts clearly paid off in terms of increasing the Conservatives' electoral success.

Others argue that the Liberal party simply lost their longstanding majority because of internal squabbles and two key "boondoggles" they created themselves: (i) the 2000 loss by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) of $1 billion in employment grants, which was the first government problem to be characterized by the Canadian Alliance opposition as a "boondoggle", and (ii) the now famous gun registry "boondoggle" (Page, 2006; Wells, 2007). Simpson's *The Friendly Dictatorship* (2002) and Clarkson's *The Big Red Machine* (2005) are commonly cited as examples that Canadians were fed up with the Liberals' sense of entitlement during this period.

Many critics identified how Martin started to make his policy announcements during the election more specific due to media and public demands. In one instance, he switched his "fixing health care for a generation" platform statement to "reducing waiting times" later in the campaign. This language change directly mimicked Harper's agenda, and it was viewed to be a vote buying gimmick as Martin's popular support was dropping (Pammett & Dornan, 2006, p. 17). In this way, Harper's 2006 agenda and its coordinated

messaging strategies notably contrasted with both the Liberals' 2004 and 2006 platforms in terms of its specificity that Canadians could easily grasp to differentiate the two parties.

Overall, Martin lost control of his agenda by changing his priorities repeatedly. The embattled Liberals began by focusing on a grand vision of a dealing with "climate change" (26 times), a new deal for the "cities and communities" (13 mentions), and the Kelowna accord, while dealing with the loss of moral authority on the accountability issue. Many middle class Canadians could not see as an immediate benefit to their economic situations in the grand vision.

In contrast, Harper's agenda in fact increased in specificity from 2004 to 2006. The 2006 Conservative platform stands out among the three party's because of its five priorities (i.e. "accountability", the child care "tax credit", "tough on crime", cutting "the gst", and supporting middle class "families" [18 mentions]), along with the segmented tax credits that were used repeatedly in the document to attract specific middle class family voters away from the Liberals, building upon the accountability frame as basis for voters searching for an alternative to the Liberal dynasty. The NDP platform, like in 2004, again overlapped with many of the Liberals' top issues (e.g. health care, child care, and tax credits). The results of the election would again demonstrate that both the Conservatives and the NDP took voters and seats away from the Liberals. The Conservative strategy of incrementally ripping voters away from the Liberals through the use of framing language, through its coordinated attack with the Layton NDP, had reached a critical tipping point in 2006, and the election tipped enough to install the Conservatives in power.

### *The 2008 Election Platforms*

The economy was the major issue going into the 2008 election; the high price of gas was increasing the prices of other goods and services, such as food, as the early impacts of the 2008 global credit crisis were being felt after the U.S. housing market bubble burst. The incumbent Conservatives' "The True North Strong and Free: Stephen Harper's Plan for Canadians" (2008) platform was released in the last week of the 2008 election, framing their plan as the most stable for the "uncertain economic times." The 44 page platform was once again the shortest of the three main national parties. The length of 44 pages is somewhat misleading though because large font type and many large images were used throughout it.

The document once again used a repetitive style, stating "A re-elected Conservative Government led by Stephen Harper will…" (84 times) to introduce each new agenda item (see Table 25 below). Gomery and accountability were no longer the top issues in the 2008 platforms. With the exception of those two issues, the Conservative document appeared to repeat their platform from 2006, though this time it lacked any strict focus on targeting the new Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, which they instead left to their negative online campaign frames of "not a leader" (see the next chapter and chapter nine). Interestingly, the title "prime minister" was only used once in the document alongside Stephen Harper's name; this use was right at the beginning in his introductory message that framed him in terms of his leadership achievements.

| Table 25: Top 10 Issue Items in the 2008 Platforms | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | | **Liberals** | | **NDP** | |
| **Pages: 44**<br>**Words (Tokens): 8384**<br>**Unique (Types): 1829** | | **Pages: 76**<br>**Words (Tokens): 26020**<br>**Unique (Types): 3340** | | **Pages: 46**<br>**Words (Tokens): 13834**<br>**Unique (Types): 2563** | |
| **Issue** | **Frequency** | **Issue** | **Frequency** | **Issue** | **Frequency** |
| conservative government | 109 (0.0130) | liberal government | 208 (0.0080) | Jack Layton | 62 (0.0045) |
| A re-elected Conservative Government led by Stephen Harper will | 84 (0.0100) | climate change | 59 (0.0023) | The new democrats | 54 (0.0039) |
| Stephen Harper | 82 (0.0098) | economy | 59 (0.0023) | Jack Layton and the new democrats | 54 (0.0039) |
| economic | 24 (0.0025) | the conservatives | 39 (0.0015) | a prime minister on your family's side for a change | 21 (0.0015) |
| economy | 19 (0.0022) | green shift | 29 (0.0011) | prime minister | 21 (0.0015) |
| children | 18 (0.0021) | conservative government | 23 (0.0009) | health care | 17 (0.0012) |
| small business | 10 (0.0012) | families | 23 (0.0009) | first nations | 15 (0.0011) |
| tax credit | 6 (0.0007) | a new liberal government | 22 (0.0009) | economy | 12 (0.0009) |
| Canadian families | 5 (0.0006) | tax credit | 18 (0.0007) | environment | 12 (0.0009) |
| mandatory prison sentences for | 5 (0.0006) | child care | 16 (0.0006) | renewable energy | 12 (0.0009) |
| regional development | 5 (0.0006) | climate change crisis | 16 (0.0006) | affordable housing | 11 (0.0008) |
| arts and culture | 4 (0.0005) | aboriginal peoples | 13 (0.0005) | child care | 11 (0.0008) |
| impaired driving | 4 (0.0005) | first nations | 11 (0.0004) | climate change | 11 (0.0008) |
| jobs for the future | 4 (0.0005) | post secondary education | 9 (0.0003) | human rights | 10 (0.0007) |
| environmental enforcement | 3 (0.0004) | greenhouse gas emissions | 8 (0.0003) | new energy economy | 10 (0.0007) |
| Liberals | 3 (0.0004) | tax cuts | 8 (0.0003) | skills training | 10 (0.0007) |
| Dion/Martin | 0 | Harper Conservatives | 5 (0.0002) | Harper conservatives | 3 (0.0002) |
| Layton/NDP | 0 | Stéphane Dion | 5 (0.0002) | Mr. Harper | 3 (0.0002) |
| | | prime minister | 4 (0.0002) | Stephen Harper | 2 (0.0001) |
| | | Stephen Harper | 3 (0.0001) | Paul Martin | 1 (0.0001) |
| | | Paul Martin | 2 (0.0001) | Stéphane Dion | 1 (0.0001) |
| | | Layton /NDP | 0 | | |

As many Canadians noted at the time, the Harper Conservatives were viewed as too

hungry for majority power, so this framing mechanism could be viewed in the light of resituating Harper simply as the party leader.

Of note, the Conservative document also did not once use the term "climate change." In an election that new Liberal leader Stéphane Dion was attempting to frame with his 76 page "Green Shift" platform (2008), the Conservatives framed the environment issue instead in terms of "environmental enforcement" (3 mentions). The NDP used the term "climate change" 12 times, and similarly talked about protecting the environment as their main goal, not the enforcement of laws.

The "Liberals: Richer, Fairer, Greener: An Action Plan for the 21st Century" platform became known more for its secondary title the "Green Shift" plan under Dion, based on its media coverage and the Conservatives' attacks that argued Dion's plan would kill the Canadian economy during the economic downturn. Dion and the Liberals framed the environmental issue as a "crisis" in their platform, and targeted the Conservatives' environmental record in office as avoiding reality, and aligning their economic record with Canada's increasing debt under the last Conservative government under Mulroney. The platform attacked the Conservatives heavily as compared to the previous years, with statements like: "Reckless cuts, irresponsible fiscal policy and divisive politics are the Harper Conservative way." The Liberals avoided attacking the NDP, most likely to their detriment as the following election results would demonstrate with votes being split on the Left.

The NDP's platform was titled "A Prime Minister on your family's side, for a change." The document repeated that phrase 21 times, and was the first time the NDP platform would make the claim that party leader Jack Layton could become prime

minister. The framing strategy in the document aligned the title “prime minister” with his name and not Stephen Harper, who the NDP chose to frame as “Mr. Harper” or the “Harper Conservatives”. Overall, both the Liberals and the NDP went green with their platforms, while the Conservatives repeated many of their unfulfilled 2006 campaign promises, arguing that they were unable to complete their agenda in a minority government, and that they needed a majority to implement their policies.

### *Analysis and Discussion: The 2008 Platforms*

The 2008 election became a battle over which party would be the best steward of the economy in the lead up to a possible global economic downturn, the full force of which would not hit until November, 2008, after the election. Both the Conservatives and the NDP framed their platforms as supporting family values; the Conservatives used their crime and safety frame to attract “Canadian families” (5 mentions) from one side of the political spectrum, while the NDP used their frame of “a prime minister on your family’s side for a change” (21 times) to attract middle class families on the other, targeting costly items like “affordable housing”, a “new energy economy”, and “skills training”. The Conservatives’ flanking strategy, coordinated with the NDP’s attack on the centre, allowed the Conservatives to target the new Liberal Leader’s Green plan and the NDP’s promises as too costly in the uncertain financial climate.

The Dion Liberals now used the language of “tax credits” that matched the Conservatives’ messaging, no longer emphasizing “tax cuts” like the previous two campaigns. The emphasis on the climate “crisis”, while well intended, missed the economic “crisis” that many Canadians were worrying about.

The Conservatives were so confident of their poll numbers that they did not bother to even release their platform until late in the race (perhaps against better judgment, because they did not achieve the long sought majority). The resultant minority government again had the Conservatives and NDP taking bigger gains at the expense of the Liberals' miscalculation on the Green Shift during difficult economic times.

The examples of the Conservatives' riding by riding strategic issue campaign to challenge the opposition candidates in key battlegrounds have been well noted at this point by others. During the 2008 election, for example, the Conservative party created a massive communication centre in an Ottawa suburb spending "millions upon millions" of campaign dollars to frame and filter their party messages and tactics by using focus groups and polls to understand how their messages would play with key Canadian demographics (McChandales, 2008). In one instance, the Conservatives spent $76 000 on focus groups to understand how to sell the Afghanistan war to Canadians; the findings recommended that the mission be described as "peacekeeping" and not a "war on terror" using the framing words "hope" and "liberty" to situate the message (Woods, 2007).

For adapting such U.S.-style framing tactics, Harper's approach has been described as ranging from that of a "strong leader" to a "control freak" (Wells, 2007). After being elected to power in 2006, Harper's control of the media through methods such as abandoning media scrums on Parliament Hill (e.g. March 24, 2006; see Politics Watch, 2006), and directing key messaging for all Conservative party Members of Parliament (MPs) through the PMO, had been common knowledge to insiders (Russell, 2008, p. 107; Wells, 2007). In one example though, Wells described the effect that having a strict agenda during the 2006-2008 period posed for the public service as a

positive turn, stating they were looking forward to any change from the long reign of the Liberals:

> After the 2006 election, the public service were happy to be focusing on just five clear priorities, and that when meetings were called, the agenda actually described what would occur during the meeting. (Wells, 2007, pp. 245-246)

Former Conservative MP Garth Turner's *Sheeple* (2009), however, tells a different story using his insider's perspective.

In October 2006, Turner was ousted from the Conservative party for his independent stance concerning the centralization of party communication through the PMO. His story is recounted in *Sheeple* using his blog postings as a source; his blog became a unique source of contention during 2006 because the PMO argued he had shared caucus secrets, while he argued he was simply communicating with his constituents and interested members of the public on important policy issues. *Sheeple* also depicted an embattled public service adapting to the centralization of power in the PMO and its control over-reaching its mandate by stepping into areas previously left to deputy ministers or individual MPs.

Similarly, Harper's proroguing of parliament in 2008 and 2009 (CBC, 2010) have been viewed by some Canadians as an abuse of his power, charging that he abused the prorogation power to avoid debating key issues such as (i) a potential Bloc-Liberal-NDP Coalition Government forming or (ii) Afghanistani prisoner abuse records being disclosed in the House. Few of these events in 2008 would be foreshadowed in the original Harper agenda, and the platforms in 2008 could therefore be said to not have been as unique in terms of changing the political horse race, as compared to 2006.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the strict five-point 2006 Conservative agenda stands out as a unique tactic among the 2004-2006 elections and the turning point for the Conservatives to build towards the 2011 majority. Doubts can be expressed about the usefulness of party platforms for setting the national agenda in the minds of voters and the general population, since we cannot know how many Canadians ever read them, but they are important documents for setting the tone for each prime minister's campaigns and eventually their government, making them critical to our political system. In comparison, Lakoff's frames analysis (2004; 2007) described the U.S. Bush Republican's strategies as representative of messages developed by a scapegoating, fear-mongering, strict, and punishing father figure; the standout Harper Conservative 2006 platform similarly directed anger at the Liberals as they attempted to harness voter frustration about the Sponsorship Program.

The Conservatives used repetitive framing strategies to stylize their platform, repeating the party leader's name and their top frames numerous times to develop strict parent themes like accountability and security. The lengthy Liberal platforms instead read like a nurturing, guiding, all-knowing protective guardian, trying to cover every agenda issue in detail. In 2004, Martin attempted to get out in front of the Sponsorship Program scandal by creating a "democratic deficit" strategy, but it was not enough to return a majority government while the Gomery Commission was still investigating the issue. In 2008, Dion's attempt at a "Green Shift" frame simply did not resonate with Canadians as one of the top national issues.

LeDuc et al.'s analysis (2011) significantly demonstrated that a party must lead

on three key policy areas in Canada to win an election: (i) the economy, (ii) national unity, and (iii) the social safety net. In the 2004 sample, national unity and the economy were not among the top issues in the party platforms. National unity was to become an issue when the full extent of the Sponsorship Program in Quebec came to light after the 2004 election through the Gomery Commission, but the Bloc and the Liberals would lose seats in each election following the 2004 campaign after the Conservative Quebec motion. In 2004, the top economic issue of the time was government spending under what would be framed as the entitled Liberals' Sponsorship Scandal, so the Liberals were not targeted primarily on the economy, but instead mainly on accountability and health care in terms of the social safety net, as LeDuc et al. and others described.

In this way, the potential mismatch of framing messages presented above in the 2004 election can be read into LeDuc et al.'s work to provide further justification for their analysis, where the Liberals moved away from their strengths in the economy, but were still able to maintain minority power because they led in other policy areas like health care, where many Canadians feared the Conservatives wanted to work towards a private/two-tiered system. Similarly, in the 2006 campaign, the Conservatives capitalized on the Sponsorship Program scandal, and were able to construct a minority win off of that top issue. While in government, the Conservatives would eventually lead the nationalism issue by crafting the Quebec nation motion; by 2008, they remained in minority power while Canadians continued to vet the Conservatives' handling of the economy and the social safety net.

The platform analyses demonstrated a shift in emphases by each party over the 2004-2011 periods. The Conservatives' transformation from the Reform days was the

most pronounced in their 2006 platform that balanced fiscal conservatism, tax credit incentives for middle class families, and social conservative framing messages to attract voters from different segments of society to build an incremental Conservative majority. Their five priorities framework contrasted with the grand visions of the Liberals.

The Liberals tried to continue offering their centre-left solutions designed from their successful strategies under Chrétien, but the frames no longer worked when support swung to the Conservatives from Canadians concerned about accountability and the costs of the Liberals' social programs that they promised to pay for with budget surpluses. Some Canadians felt the surpluses indicated that they were taxed too much, and the Conservatives did well to foster this frame through their proposed tax credits and dropping the GST by two percent (from 7 to 5). The Liberals platforms each attempted to provide grand visions of the future to Canadians, from Martin's new deals for cities, a national child care plan, and a generational health care fix, to Dion's Green Shift. Canadians turned away from each successive Liberal plan.

Like the Conservatives, the NDP's platforms also underwent a major transformation. They changed from representing the party that never openly espoused they could form a national government, generally offering left leaning solutions to hold the Liberals to account, to one that blatantly touted Jack Layton as the next prime minister in 2008. In this way, the Liberals were dismantled from both sides of the political spectrum.

By way of summary, the list of key factors for successful minority governments can be read into platforms:

1. **Executive Style:** The platforms by their nature are written from the perspective of a prime minister that aims to achieve a majority and go it alone. However, the

issue analysis above demonstrated that not surprisingly the Liberals and the NDP frequently shared key issues. In this way, Harper's agendas reflected his style of going it alone, while Martin and Dion's platforms lent themselves to brokering deals from the NDP more collaboratively in terms of both parties approaching the electorate using similar issue frames (there was no formally announced plan to partner).

2. **Framing the Agenda (i.e. the dominant problem, politics, and policy stream issue):** The most successful platform of the 2004-2011 period was Harper's 2006 platform in terms of actually framing his party's ambitions with its five priorities (this will be analyzed in more depth in chapter seven). It was also notably the key tipping point for the Conservatives to form the government by being designed to use the accountability issue as a basis to attract fiscally minded middle class family voters away from the Liberals.

3. **Institutional Factors (i.e. support in Cabinet and the House):** The platforms did not reflect institutional factors such as representing individual Cabinet ministers or the makeup of the past House, beyond presenting the issues that they represent to best attract voters. The platforms made few or no mentions of other party candidates or Cabinet ministers, truly making it a centralizing document that reflects the incumbent PMO's views of the political climate, thereby constructing the prime minister as the face of the party and main arbiter of the party's agenda.

4. **Media Technologies:** The platform as a technology has newly been offered in PDF format online since 2004. This change has facilitated the ease in which interested voters can access it, and also the ease of the automated issues analysis above. In this way, the document itself represents the shift to Internet age.

The next chapter demonstrates that when all uses of technology during the electoral campaign are relatively equal, it comes down to messaging to control and set the agenda, a feat that the Conservatives once again led among the field of players.

## Chapter Six
## Agenda Setting, Framing, and the Party Election Websites 2004-2008

> There's some old video footage of Joe Clark's government falling to a confidence vote in 1979. It ends with MPs and observers throwing a shower of loose-leaf and shredded paper into the air, celebrating the giddy uncertainty of an election many hadn't expected. Now a half-dozen Liberal MPs tried to recreate the moment, tossing skyward some sheets of paper they had taken pains to pre-shred. The effort seemed more pathetic than festive. There wasn't enough paper. There wasn't enough surprises. You can't recreate past glories. The chamber emptied within minutes.
>
> - Paul Wells describing November 28, 2005 (*Right Side Up*, 2007, p. 164)

Perhaps the Clark government paper-tossing moment could not be recreated by the Martinites during their last days in power, because paper was the medium of the past and the Liberals missed the opportunity to instead effectively harness the medium of the digital age and better adapt their messaging during their precarious hold on power. The question arises, how did the use of the newest technology of the era, that of the Internet, help to set the agenda during the Canadian election campaigns that led to minority governments? Did the Internet have any effects whatsoever when it was linked with techniques like demographic message framing? And to what degree did the websites complement the party programs described in the previous chapter?

This chapter first reviews the descriptive work on Internet election campaign websites, then analyzes the supply-side technologies used in the 2004-2008 election campaigns to better understand how the parties have used new technologies to leverage their messages during the minority government horse races. The top issues of the 2004-2008 election campaigns are then analyzed to establish the framing narratives that were delivered from the party websites. The frames analysis employs Rogers's (2004) issue network methods to identify the salient issue units.

The analysis in the chapter demonstrates that the federal party electoral websites

have been used predominantly to attract voters by selling the image the party's leader and his agenda; the electoral websites did not promote other party members in their key issues pages or newsfeeds during the elections. In this way, the website campaign technologies and the bag of salient issues were used to create the living platform of the campaign. The websites were the steering mechanism of for partisan messaging during the campaign, holding as closely to the agenda as possible to demonstrate a leader's consistency on each issue. By 2008, the websites offered further contextualizing stories and links to favourable media and propaganda, but overall, all parties eschewed the new interactive tools that were available through social media, ensuring that no challenge to the agenda set by the respective leadership of each party was possible on their own websites. This contrasts sharply with the engaged grassroots Obama election campaign in 2008, which held e-town hall discussions and encouraged viral voter registration through a number of e-tools and social media suites (Kenski, Hardy & Jamieson, 2010; Plouffe, 2010).

If the Canadian party campaign websites were changing agenda setting, then it was through the live updates on issues, their connected frames, and the donations attracted from them that continuously reinforced the frames, not in their uses of social media technologies to galvanize voters into being self-identifying Facebook supporters like in the U.S. This reflects a uniquely Canadian cultural (and institutionally limited) perspective on the use and uptake of e-campaigning and the obsessive desire to control the agenda as much as possible.

In "parties@canada" (2004), Small provided a thorough summary of each party's Web technologies and the delivered content in the 2004 election, which methodologically is described as a "supply side" analysis, versus that of a "demand side" analysis that

instead surveys how people interpret a website's messages. Her work was not repeated for the 2006 and 2008 elections, so a lacuna exists in the coverage of these election's Internet campaigns. Her work is used as a model that will be developed and supplemented further in the following analysis in an attempt to fill in the missing information for the partisan Web technologies that were used and the supply side analyses of the 2006 and 2008 election campaign websites.

An integrated website strategy was developed by each party during this time as the parties were forced to reckon with the new medium in terms of its benefits and limitations. Although no party used blogs consistently until 2008, theorists like Brown (2010) argued that new social media technologies like the blogosphere were just "white noise" in the 2006 election and were not even a great benefit for partisan users like bloggers, because citizen journalists only became important if their stories were carried by the mainstream media. Others like Benkler (2006) presented evidence that Web technologies demonstrated an amazing potential for democratizing how people organized and shared information to challenge and create power (as was described in chapter one). The truth for Canada's federal political climate falls between those two poles, in that the partisan uses of the Internet and citizen journalists may have been slow to influence the horse race with truly unique e-campaigns, but evidence does exist that social media were changing the game in terms of "gotcha" politics and holding leaders to account.

If platforms are a thorough description of each party's agenda, then their election websites have become the shiny glossy title page that keeps interested party supporters in the glowing bubble of party propaganda, with dynamic up-to-date stories designed to reflect and reinforce the partisan worldview that is narrated in the static platform. In other

words, the online party "home pages" and newsfeeds represent the living agenda during the horse race, as the communication teams re-frame the standing party policy within the coordinated infoscape of the overall party strategy.

Communication theorist Vincent Mosco argued in his work *The Political Economy of Communication* (1996) that no understanding of contemporary communication is complete without looking at the underlying "structuration" of new technological communication networks. He stated, "structuration balances the tendency in political economic analysis to feature structures, typically business and governmental institutions, by addressing and incorporating the ideas of agency, social relations, social process, and social practice" (Mosco, 1996, p. 213). Put otherwise, political messaging and campaigning, like other socio-technical organizing processes, require an understanding of their underlying foundations and structures. The social structures have definitively been altered with each new technological restructuring changing the rules of the election game; sometimes subtly, sometimes profoundly, whether it was the new multimedia party websites of the 2004 election, blogs and donations in 2006, or the mobile social media of 2008.

Agenda-setting research can target how power is structured in terms of the political messages that are disseminated over the technological networks; the discourse that flows through networks simultaneously constructs and guides a party's actions. Agency can be identified by studying the repetitive language structures and frames in the political messages. There can be no consequences for the actions of politicians by which the electorate can hold them accountable without this agency in the creation of government agendas and policy (and by extension, Web materials). Agency has been

shifted to the party leaders and the PMO because of the centralizing capabilities Internet technologies afford.

Similarly, spatial communication theorist Shaun Moores's "The Doubling of Place" (*Mediaspace*, 2004) described how *online* messages and reality collide in a new type of technological structure; mainly in that digital messages double and multiply using the medium of the Internet. For example, the prime minister could be in two (or more) places at once using digital media: (i) at his desk in Ottawa and (ii) simultaneously at home on multiple computer, television, and mobile phone screens.

Agenda-setting and frames analysis research lays bare these structures and the operating rules for conveying messages that are transmitted through the technologies in documents like platforms (chapter five), Web pages (chapter six), and political speeches (chapter seven). This research helps to point to these documents as sutures trying to tie together political differences over time through the writing of a unifying narrative for all Canadians (or in the Bloc's case for Quebeckers). What terms and labels have been used repetitively online in the 2004, 2006, and 2008 election campaigns to create consistent party election frames and unifying narratives?

**I. Descriptive Analyses of the Election e-Campaigns 2004-2008**

Pal described the early effects of information technology (IT) on partisan politics, stating that "Traditionally, parties recruit candidates, wage electoral campaigns, frame issues, and represent voters in the policy process. In most democracies they also perform the vital function of stabilizing political debate. IT has affected all of these functions, and on balance appears to have weakened the role of parties" (Pal, 1997, p.20). Pal was

beginning to address the role IT played in resituating power in the PMO away from allowing candidates to speak on their own. IT and the Internet allowed for a centralized PMO to effectively deliver the "party message" to candidates immediately and maintain control over the entire party, while also simultaneously offering an increased ability to monitor the actions of MPs. In 1997, the full power of the Internet had yet to affect government and campaigning though.

Many political scientists and journalists, including Clarkson (2005), Wells (2007) and LeDuc et al. (2011), have missed describing the details of the changing platforms, the Internet election campaigns, and both of their effects on recent Canadian elections. They have instead focused on other traditional aspects of the horse race based on Martin and Harper's leadership styles, or through tracking key policy issues. Reviewing their work can aid in understanding how parties developed their agendas, though the story is not complete without the Internet component.

Small (2004) observed that the Canadian Federal Election of 2000 was the nation's first Internet election, because the majority of Canadians had gained network access by that point. The Web first became public in 1992, so the adoption rate for federal politics was different for many Western nations, with the U.S. and Canada being among the early leaders. The Internet was not viewed as a game changer in the 2000 election though, because the party websites simply repeated traditional party materials, were sparse in their content, and did not take advantage of any new interactive features. As well, only one-third of Liberal or NDP candidates had an individual campaign website (Small, 2004, p. 204). In other words, Canadian politicos were still working to understand the benefit of the new medium in 2000.

The 2004 election was a turning point in terms of cyber-campaigning, with each party offering standard e-newsletters, posting flashy multimedia ads, and harnessing the full suite of e-options available to online users of the period. Small concluded though that the use of the Internet most likely still did not affect the results of the 2004 election (Small, 2004, p. 230). A few minor technology problems dogged each party's e-campaigns (e.g. each party posted French content on their English website at times; typos also persisted, as well as broken links); overall though, the party websites were becoming successfully integrated within their main messaging strategies and reflective of their traditional print content. They did not detract from their campaigns significantly.

She also concluded that the major parties did not use the power of the medium to narrowcast and target specific groups of voters, like ethnic communities, regional voters, young savvy Internet users, or those interested in interactive participatory e-democracy. The Green Party and the Bloc did use such interactive e-technologies like discussion boards and forums to build policy, but the other national parties did not because of the possibility of losing control of their message.

In 2006, the Conservatives applied a coordinated media campaign that attacked Martin's program, and those attacks had the support of the new backchannel of partisan bloggers (Pammett & Dornan, 2006; 2008; Elmer et al., 2009). It is unclear how many Canadians were influenced by any of the Internet campaign during this period, as blogs were still viewed mostly as the realm of politicos (Brown, 2010). Blogs, however, had the possibility to affect mainstream media with "gotcha" politics moments.

Liberal campaign manager Warren Kinsella's *The War Room* (2007) described the use of blogs and partisan bloggers in the Liberals' attempts to filter stories to the

media and to frame party actions:

> Far beyond my expectations, or anyone else's, the blog became a key part of everything I did about sponsorship, Chrétien, and the out-of-control, wildly unfair, plainly partisan Gomery commission. When the slime-Chrétien operation was at its height, reporters were telling me that more people were reading *my* take on the Gomery circus than *their* news stories. (Kinsella, 2007, p. 219)

Bloggers could hold the media and each party's candidates accountable through gotcha politics that might transfer over from the blogosphere to the evening news if one candidate made a slip, like if a candidate stated one message to one type of voter, while saying something else to another (e.g., the now familiar John Kerry "flip-flop" label). In the 2006 campaign, blogs became a safer form of attack channel than a direct party attack advertisement on television, radio, or the home party site, because of the perceived distance from the party elite. New technology had led to the power of having one agenda for the public, and a backchannel for what the party hoped to really accomplish (Small, 2007, 2010; Wells, 2007).

From a communication's perspective, the analysis of online framing strategies has been largely ignored in Canada, despite the fact that Internet use continued to rise during the run up to each election (see Table 26 below).

**Table 26: Media Consumption in Canada (CRTC, 2010)**

| YEAR | TV: Average Use | Radio: Average Use | Internet: Access |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2009** | 26.5 hours/week | 17.7 hours/week | 80% |
| **2008** | 26.6 hours/week | 18.3 hours/week | 78% |
| **2005** | 25.1 hours/week | 19.1 hours/week | 78 % |
| **2004** | 24.7 hours/week | 19.5 hours/week | 76 % |

Smith and Chen (2009) also noted the rate of Internet adoption rose during this period, but it was by no means a uniform increase across Canada's provinces (see Table 27).

| Table 27: Internet Adoption for 2005 and 2007 (Smith & Chen, 2009, p. 10) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Province** | **2005 %** | **2007 %** |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 55 | 61 |
| Prince Edward Island | 61 | 69 |
| Nova Scotia | 67 | 69 |
| New Brunswick | 57 | 65 |
| Quebec | 62 | 69 |
| Ontario | 72 | 75 |
| Manitoba | 66 | 70 |
| Saskatchewan | 66 | 73 |
| Alberta | 71 | 77 |
| British Columbia | 69 | 78 |

Similarly, mobile and wireless extensions of the Web had increased to the point where 23.8 million Canadians subscribed to the technology (CRTC, 2009), while only 16.8 million did at the end of 2005 (CRTC, 2005). This technological diffusion was remarkable considering that the Blackberry mobile device was only introduced in 2002, but by 2006 the term "CrackBerry" was coined to recognize its addictive qualities and pervasive use by owners.

The 2008 U.S. election saw the advent of using such mobile devices to advertise partisan events, request donations, and recommend party leaders to friends. The Blackberry and Internet-enabled mobile phones could link into new social media that were gaining popularity. Unlike blogs in the 2006 Canadian election, the game changing uses of social media like Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), and Twitter (2006) would not impact Canadian elections fully until 2008, because their adoption was not as widespread due to the technologies being too new in Canada.

By the October 14, 2008 election, Blackberry communication and social media uses outside of the House were certainly staples of the political media ecology, with Harper arguably losing a majority government because of Quebec's Michel Rivard's viral YouTube video, the "Culture in Danger" video, posted September 19, 2008, that focused

on cuts to the Arts (Pammett & Dornan, 2008). The video would achieve over 200,000 views internationally before the election, and it led to the organization of several national protests, notably organizing a backlash against the Conservatives in Quebec, where they had gained seats in 2006.

If Martin's parliament was holding onto the paper dreams of the past in 2005, Rivard's YouTube video was the fully digital election watershed moment in Canada when the Internet clearly led to changes in voter behavior and electoral outcomes (Pammett & Dornan, 2008, p. 13).

The Canadian social media watershed certainly lagged well behind the Howard Dean fundraising uses of the Internet in his failed 2004 U.S. presidential bid. In a unique first, Dean's campaign used the Internet to build $50 million in funding through mostly small donations made online. Similarly, the now legendary $650 million fundraising in President Barack Obama's "Yes, We Can!" social media election campaign of November 4, 2008, has yet to be matched in Canada or elsewhere (Kenski, Hardy & Jamieson, 2010; Plouffe, 2010). Obama, following Dean's lead, raised nearly half of his campaign donations in dominations of less than $200 via the Internet. This meant that more lower to middle-class individuals supported his campaign with small denominations, which he could return to request more from later in the campaign via digital means. The Liberals notably had Dean speak to the party on November 29, 2006, before the election to offer advice, but history has since demonstrated that the Liberals were defeated despite having a newly designed Internet presence.

*Campaign Websites 2004: Supply-side Analysis*

**Figure 7: Party Websites 2004**

| Conservatives | Liberals | NDP |
|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |

**NOTE:** These screen shots of the 2004 websites were obtained using the Internet Archive's WayBack Machine (see: http://www.archive.org/web/web.php). No complete public archive remains of them.

In 2004, Small's "parties@canada" chapter in Pammett and Dornan's *The Canadian General Election* (2004) described the partisan elections sites as generally repeating the messages of the party's traditional pamphlets and media materials. Some media critics even called the websites little more than lawn signs, especially compared to the websites used in recent U.S. political campaigns. Small described how the campaign websites were all launched the day the election writ dropped on May 23, 2004, with the lone exception of the Conservatives who waited until the following day. Table 28 presents a list of the interactive digital tools provided in the 2004 election sorted by party.

**Table 28: Interactive Tools Used Online by the Political Parties 2004 (Small, 2004)**

| | BQ | Cons | GP | Lib | NDP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Donation | X | X | X | X | X |
| Membership | X | X | X | X | X |
| Volunteer | | X | X | X | X |
| E-postcards | X | X | | | |
| Send to a friend | | X | X | X | |
| Promote action | | | X | X | X |
| Downloadables | | X | | | X |
| Contribute to the site | X | | | | |
| Merchandise | | | X | | X |

Of the top three English-speaking parties, the Conservative and NDP websites offered the highest number of interactive features in this relatively early phase of Internet campaigning. The merits of e-postcards or contributing content to a party's site should be understood as limited at this point for their usefulness, and they should definitely not be confused with the viral social media possibilities that would be available by 2008. The websites were mostly text based with sparse uses of graphics in 2004.

It is clear from Small's summary that the Web was still in development at this phase, so it is reasonable to only use each party's platform for a summary of the key agenda issues circulating in 2004, especially when this is added to the fact that no public archive is available of the content.

Table 29 below helps to clarify this point by presenting the number of news stories each party posted through their website during the campaign. Small made the point that the party websites were mainly being used as central communication vehicles by analyzing the content of the stories posted on the party websites. With the exception of the Liberals, the stories did not target different regions or specific groups of voters to any consistent degree.

**Table 29: Party News Stories (Source: Small, 2004)**

| Party | Site Section | Number of Stories | Regionally-based Stories |
|---|---|---|---|
| BQ | • Manchettes | 59 | N/A |
| Cons | • Press releases | 65 | 9 |
| Lib | • Press releases | | |
| | • Top stories | | |
| | • Reality checks | 153 | 25 |
| NDP | • The latest news | | |
| | • Headlines | 109 | 7 |

Also note in Table 29 that the number of story media channels was still limited to 1-3

channels at the most, but by 2008, multiple party channels, social media, and associated websites would be offering content at the rates identified above. The story channels in 2004 were not yet Really Simple Syndication (RSS) newsfeeds (the now common automated e-news aggregators), and therefore the party websites were limited to mainly "pull" media type of interactions, where supporters had to seek out the party websites, but could not "push" its content easily or in multiple ways to other people. As an historical note, 2004's election only had one use of blogging, that of the Liberals youth wing (Small, 2004).

***Campaign Websites 2006: Supply-side Analysis***

**Figure 8: Party Websites 2006**

| Conservatives | Liberals | NDP |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |

In 2006, the websites were all launched immediately following the writ being dropped; however, many of the new features had become standard before the election notice, with the "permanent campaign" media mentality having established its hold during the Liberal minority government period. The basic information tools used on the party websites were still limited to static text and graphics mostly, which was particularly noticeable to savvy e-users in the context of the burgeoning Web 2.0 interactive formats found elsewhere on the Web. Common tools like discussion forums, blog space, social bookmarking, and video blogs were still too innovative for most of the parties to

experiment with; although some might expect that those tools would have been readily adopted in a competitive environment where new technology could help a party or candidate to win, or similarly parties would adopt tools that could foster open participatory democracy to connect with voters.[16]

Table 30 below presents a list of the digital mechanisms that the parties used during the election campaign that could be accessed from the respective party home pages. The main addition to the interactive tools in this election was that of RSS feeds and blogging tools (Small, 2007). Use of syndicated blogs grew after the release of the 2002 RSS 2.0 format, which would become the most common blog syndication standard, but it was not widely adopted until 2005, when the common Mozilla Firefox icon "" for RSS 2.0 capabilities was used by other Internet browsers to promote compliance to the format.

| **Table 30: Interactive Tools Used by the Political Parties in 2006** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Interactive Tools** | **Conservatives** | **Liberals** | **NDP** |
| ***Traditional*** | | | |
| Donate | X | X | X |
| Volunteer | X | X | X |
| Become a Member | X | X | X |
| ***Online*** | | | |
| e-cards | X | | |
| e-desktop pictures/wallpaper | X | X | X |
| e-newsletter signup | X | | X |
| e-contact info | X | X | X |
| Multimedia | X | X | X |
| Podcasts | X | X | |
| RSS feeds (Blogs) | X | | X |

From Table 30, the Conservatives can be viewed as the potential leader in using online tools to allow information leaders interested in their messages to spread (or "push") the

[16] This lack of technology adoption is a good example of Smith and Chen's work (2009; 2010) that noted that the use of technological adoption depends on the cultural context, and is neither technological determined or autonomous.

Conservative message. The Conservative lead is important to consider here in terms of how journalists and other early-blog adopters turned to the Web in this election, especially as the Conservatives used the blogosphere as a backchannel to frame the Liberal agenda as over-extended, arrogantly entitled, and overall weak in terms of providing Canadians with accountability.

Perhaps surprisingly, no direct contact with elected MPs or other members of the parties was made available through the splash pages for any of these parties; only indirect linked means were still being offered in 2006. Specifically, no Web 2.0 blogs, instant messaging, live chat sessions, YouTube channels, or discussion boards with direct links to specific MPs were visible—all of these now common technologies were available at the time; yet only e-mail addresses were provided to the party Web page administrators. Rogers (2004) similarly identified this type of distancing from the electorate and moderating of issues by parties in the United Kingdom and Germany. Web 2.0 tactics, however, have been identified with increasing voter interest (Adamic & Glance, 2005), and as mentioned previously, Obama's presidential campaign eventually used such Web campaigning tools to a great effect.

In 2006, the NDP were well known for their use of e-mail lists as a main means for contacting their base.[17] The Conservatives, however, went further than having people simply register on their website, and they instead offered e-cards, podcasts, and blog links, which were innovative strategies to employ potential viral marketing techniques. Smith and Chen (2009) noted the following key importance of the party websites by the

[17] Notably, the Green party "living platform" offered a wiki and online polling, which are two technologies that could be viewed as representative of encouraging participatory democracy; however, more research into how these tools attract voters is needed, especially because the Green party had yet to win a seat in the House.

time of the 2008 election:

> The Conservatives, for example, described online fundraising "as the only kind of fundraising we did." The reliance on online fundraising extended across the board. The Green Party acknowledged that "we probably raised ninety percent of our cash online." (Smith & Chen, 2009, p. 24)

In other words, possibly the top achievement of the 2006 websites was how Canadians were using them to donate.

Overall, among the deterministic structures of the party websites, the Conservatives offered the most unique innovations for agenda setting in their "Key Issues" window that helped to give the media and party supporters a means of verifying the top issues of the party, easily being able to explain the issues to others, and then similarly hold the party to account. This Key Issues window effectively linked to their five key policy initiatives on "accountability", "lower taxes", "crime", "child care" tax credits, and support for middle class "families" listed in their platform and repeated in traditional media. Perhaps not surprisingly, each of the Conservative key issues would rank highly in the analysis of the party Web pages below (i.e. in terms of word frequency), because the information was repeated every day and captured in the website's information (see Section III below). Some of these issues also appeared on the other parties' websites in their responses to critiquing the Conservative policies, which increased the resonance of the particular issues over time.

*Campaign Websites 2008: Supply-side Analysis*

| Figure 9: Party Websites 2008 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | **Liberals** | **NDP** |
|   |   |   |

By 2008, all of the political parties in Canada were attempting to follow the Obama Internet success story by utilizing social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter on their centralized party websites; however, not every individual candidate was using the tools yet, so diffusion was not completely ubiquitous (Smith & Chen, 2009). Smith and Chen noted four areas of media convergence in their summary of the 2008 partisan e-campaigns: (i) the focus on the leader's name and image, (ii) positioning of video clips on the front page, (iii) standardization of key content areas (like media releases, candidate lists, and policy documents), and (iv) the website interactive functions (e.g. donations, e-newsletters, and RSS feeds). Overall, they argued that campaign managers had "come to accept the role of websites (as a "pull" rather than a "push" medium) as skewed towards supporters and professional media" (Smith & Chen, 2008, p. 24). In short, the parties were building upon the successes of the use of the Web in previous elections.

Table 31 below presents an update to the common tools each of the parties used in the 2008 campaign. To many, it was clear that 2008 saw the first full use of sophisticated supply-side technologies to facilitate targeted attack ads from each of the three major parties, with Stéphane Dion suffering great losses in the polls from the Conservatives'

"Not a Leader" framing attacks through YouTube (see chapter nine for more on this campaign).

| Table 31: Interactive Tools Used by the Political Parties 2008 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Interactive Tools** | **Conservatives** | **Liberals** | **NDP** |
| ***Traditional*** | | | |
| Donate | X | X | X |
| Volunteer | X | X | X |
| Become a Member | X | X | X |
| ***Online*** | | | |
| e-cards | X | X | X |
| e-desktop pictures/wallpaper | X | X | X |
| e-newsletter signup | X | X | X |
| e-contact info | X | X | X |
| Multimedia | X | X | X |
| Podcasts | X | X | X |
| RSS feeds (blogs) | X | X | X |
| Facebook | X | X | X |
| Twitter | X | X | X |
| YouTube | X | X | X |

The Internet had become established as a vital campaign tool in this election with each party using coordinated framing techniques across all forms of digital media consistently. However, we can note that only the proprietary media of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube offered real Web 2.0 interaction, and even then, these tools were usually moderated by party operatives. In this way, the Internet became integrated into the modern Canadian political cultural setting, and instead of facilitating a new kind of participatory democracy as early Internet predictors had hoped, the party Web pages became professionalized as a closed leader-centered pull medium, which Vincent Mosco (1996), Neil Washbourne (2009), and many other Internet scholars had noted occurred with each preceding form of media (i.e. newspaper, radio, and television).

## II. Methodology: Issues Selection and the Data Sample

The dataset analyzed below focused on the key issue "text" of the three federal English parties' websites collected during three periods:

1. **The 2004 Election (May 23, 2004 to June 28, 2004):** Only the party platforms were used in this dissertation's sample; unfortunately, there is no available public archive of the 2004 election websites, but Small's "parties@canada" (2004) offered a thorough analysis of the Web technologies used in the election. As well, Pammett and Dornan (2004) described the dominant issues in the campaign. Their works are used to supplement the platform issues units identified in the previous chapter.

2. **The 2006 Election (November 28, 2005 to January 23, 2006):** Half of the eight week 2006 election campaign was analyzed, specifically December 7, 2005 to January 11, 2006 (28 days = 4 weeks). This timeline selection served to capture any bifurcated campaign strategies used before and after the winter holidays and New Years Day. Other academic descriptive analyses have said the holiday break was the key period of change during the election (Pammett & Dornan, 2006; Page, 2006, Wells, 2007); were they correct? Were any dominant issue changes reflected on the party websites before and after the holiday?

3. **The 2008 Election (September 7th to October 14th, 2008):** The entire five week 2008 campaign was analyzed to establish the most salient issues of the campaign for each party using their platforms and website newsfeeds. The newsfeeds were selected instead of the 2006 splash page headlines because the partisan splash pages had each become graphic based, and the graphics only changed headlines on a weekly basis. In other words, the newsfeeds had moved from the splash page to the partisan RSS "news aggregators" or "newsfeeds", which were more appropriate for tracking "issue units" for the 2008 election due to that key technological change.

All of the coded information from the websites was captured during these periods, with the exception of the 2004 campaign where the platforms were the main document analyzed. These periods of time were selected in order to compare three methods for

selecting the top election issues – in 2004, the platforms were the sole source; in 2006; the platforms and splash pages (containing the newsfeeds); and in 2008, the platforms and newsfeeds.

The coded information included such things as images, party hyperlinks, and pertinent event dates; but the following analysis focused solely on the "text", identifying words as "issue units"—it does not quantify graphics or images in anyway, although they are also known to play an important part in political persuasion and framing (e.g. Entman, 2004; 2006; Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010; Kumar, 2007).

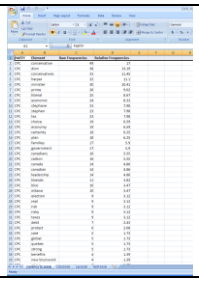
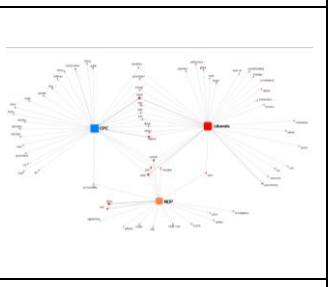
In Roger's work, informational politics were investigated at multiple levels, from the "back-end" meta tags and cookies found in the code, to the "front-end" visual design, themes, and pointed arguments found in the formal content (Rogers, 2004, p. 31). This chapter first described the front-end supply-side technologies used on the party websites (see Section I above), and now turns to analyse the issues conveyed through the specific technologies of the splash pages and newsfeeds; it does not review the back-end components, beyond the following short description.

The initial code scraping (or data saving) process highlighted the ease with which code (and its respective accompanying functions) could be disaggregated, separated, and formatted into databases to create a sample. The suffix "txt" for example provided the requisite code that indicated the plain text from a Web page, from where the following salient issues were captured. This study aims to do the same as Rogers' work that harnessed the power of new digital tools to perform his analysis of election issues, and his work is very much a record of how new tools have been reflexively changing the way that researchers understand political communication through their application to new

objects of study.

After the initial data scrape was saved, the HyperPo text analysis program was used to identify similarities and discrepancies of use between the political parties' platforms and online home pages in terms of (i) simple comparisons with news coverage that can be performed on demand without the loss of any information due to the party changing their website information (see Section III below), and (ii) the main issues that each party was representing on their sites (see Section III below). The raw word count was captured in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that lists the number of times an actor's name was used or an issue unit appeared in each object. Figure 10 below provides an example of the four step process of analysis.

**Figure 10: Method for Creating Network Maps**

| 1. Text Document | 2. HyperPo Concordance Software | 3. Microsoft Excel | 4. RéseauLu Map |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Text Document:** First, a digital copy of the political information object was created in Microsoft Word (e.g. platform, newsfeed, etc.). The document was then saved as a text-only file.

2. **Concordance Software:** A list of keyword frequencies was created using a freely available concordance tool that could read each Microsoft Word digital transcript (there are many freely available concordance tools online now; for example, see http://www.tapor.ca). The keywords in this case were used as the issue units. The concordance tool eliminates some 300 "stop" words, like articles and prepositions, so that the top issue units (as nouns) can be studied.

3. **Microsoft Excel Document:** The frequencies for the key issues in the data samples were imported into two columns of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

4. **RéseauLu (or Network Look) Software:** Finally, a network software was used to create the network map of the selected Microsoft Excel spreadsheet columns (e.g. "Issues" and "Frequency" are used in the figures in this analysis), to cluster the data according to commonly available statistical analysis techniques. The RéseauLu visualisations therefore record any links between the political parties and their shared issue units. For the full RéseauLu image see Figures 11-13 below.

Some technical training is required to understand the RéseauLu software, but all of the other software is straightforward and easy to use.

The relatively new RéseauLu (Mogoutov, 2008) network visualization software was used to create the node-spoke infographic depicted in Figures 11-13 below. Its method follows other network research in this area that quantifies "actors," "key words," or "issue units," to create the network maps (Marres, 2005; Rogers, 2005). RéseauLu plots the nodes in terms of the nodes' frequency of use and their link with other nodes:

> The algorithm optimises the positioning of objects in a two dimensional space focusing on the existence of "strong" ties. The initial binary matrix of links can be represented without deformation only in a multidimensional space. To minimize the deformation of the final map in a two dimensional space, the software uses a dynamic positioning simulating the interaction between objects. It does so through a three step optimisation process: (i) global initial positioning of the object vis-á-vis all the other objects in the space; (ii) micro-optimisation of the positioning of the object vis-á-vis the other objects to which it is directly connected ("network neighbours"); and (iii) meso-optimisation of groups of highly connected objects ("clusters"). The optimization process depends on explicit rules defining symmetry properties, structural equivalence of points inside the structure, centrality and "betweeness" of objects. ("Issue Network," 2004)

Using this method, Figure 10 above displays the raw count tabulation of the party names

and the issues represented in each partisan object.[18] The issue tracking results are presented visually using RéseauLu to represent each of the political parties' uses of specific campaign issues and themes.[19] The visualizations provide an overview of the infoscape enacted by the three parties online, and they also identify the top issues that are tracked in the remaining dissertation.

Obviously in any election a vast amount of information accumulates, and information overload for online content raises methodological problems for any researcher. This key methodological problem of information overload in informational politics research led to the selection of this experimental methodological approach for analyzing the multiple party websites. Specifically, researchers must consider the problem of what methodologies are best used to analyze online content that is:

1. often constantly changing, which leads to information loss without the proper tools to capture and save the material (e.g. the 2004 websites that are not archived publically anywhere),

2. and at the same time, too large to analyze quickly without computer assistance?

Work by Kristen Foot and Steven Schneider (2006), Christine Hine (2005), and Richard

[18] Noortje Marres's "issue network" research (Marres, 2005; 2006) and Christine Hine's discussion of "hyperlink analysis" in her work *Virtual Methods* (Hine, 2005) offer two examples of influences on this form of network analysis. Both methods attempt to track particular e-textual objects like a "key issue word" or "hyperlink" from horizontal networks (a static document) to vertical networks (other documents and media). Greg Elmer's Infoscape Research Lab at Ryerson University has also published work in this area that tracks digital documents like blogs and other political communications among actors (Elmer, Ryan, Langlois, Devereaux, McKelvey, Redden & Curlew, 2007; Elmer, Langlois, Devereaux, McKelvey, Ryan, Redden & Curlew, 2009). I provide these references as alternative sites to explore the influences on political issue network research.

[19] The RéseauLu software is similar to many other social network visualisation software packages like Pajek or UCINET. The software was used to successful display differences in the media and the Conservatives' frames on crime in Elmer, Skinner, and Devereaux's work on gun violence as a major issue in the 2006 election in their paper "Disaggregating online news: The Canadian federal election, 2005-2006" (2006). Their findings on the Conservatives' crime frame are corroborated in the results below.

Rogers (2004) has described how research using online tools to investigate political communication on the Web can still only be deemed experimental. However, Hine also argued that "Methodological solutions gain much of their authority through precedent" (Hine, 2005, p. 1). The hope of this research is to build off of Rogers' work as a precedent, and extend the power of "issue network" analysis to the Canadian context.

### III. The Top Website Issues for 2006 and 2008

Following Small's work (2004), the top issues online in 2004 can be viewed as consistent with the platform's issues because the websites contained static content that was integrated into traditional party materials and campaign tactics. However, the 2006 and 2008 campaigns have not had their messages compared in a similar way following Small's supply-side analysis. The following analysis is modeled after her previous work.

For 2006, the general sample information for each party's website is presented in Table 32 below. From the basic information collected in Table 32, the fact that the Conservatives used their website to present the greatest amount of information is evident; however, the low frequency of unique words on their website also demonstrated that they changed the information on their Web "home page" the fewest number of times out of any of the parties.

**Table 32: Sample Information 2006**

| | **Conservatives** | **Liberals** | **NDP** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sample entries (Days)** | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| **Total words (Tokens)** | 13204 | 8379 | 3411 |
| **Unique words (Types)** | 795 | 1103 | 443 |
| **Highest word frequency** | 455 | 432 | 144 |
| **Splash page news stories posted** | 33 | 70 | 58 |

The Liberals led in unique words, because they changed their information frequently. The

NDP trailed in all categories. These totals reflect the semiology of each party's message in the amount of information presented to voters, limited by their output, message selection, and technological choices. While the Liberals posted on average 2-3 news stories a day, the NDP posted 2 each day, but the NDP headlines contained less information (or were shorter in terms of words used). The Conservatives only posted on average 1 story a day, but also offered Reality Checks on their website home page that increased the information shared.

On further examination, a consistent pattern appeared in that the Conservatives stuck to their key messages more successfully than in their previous election attempts during the Liberal dynasty (see chapter five for examples). This finding can be supported by a simple reading of the plain text on their website, and not necessarily by using HyperPo or Microsoft Excel to read the text. Table 33 presents a sample of the plain text of the Conservative party's website as an example of the information captured automatically using page saving software for each party's websites. The following sample was captured on January 5, 2006, and it is representative of how the Conservative party's website contained the most textual information of the three parties (see Table 33).

| Table 33: The Conservative Party's Splash Page Text for January 5, 2006 |
| --- |
| Stephen Harper plans to create 125,000 new child care spaces--><br><br>06 January 2006 Community Child Care Investment Program will provide employers $10,000 assistance for each new space<br><br><br>Reality Check Paul Martin is running against his record on education<br><br>05 January 2006 Today, Paul Martin unveiled a series of new education commitments as a part of his continuing campaign against his own government's record. While Mr. Martin has repeatedly said that education is a priority for his government, his actions don't live<br>Martin running against his record<br>04 January 2006 Today Paul Martin continued to campaign against his own record. The Liberals are making up policy on their campaign plane and promising to reverse policies they themselves put in place.<br>Martin's dismal record on social programs<br>03 January 2006 Paul Martin is trying to sell his daycare scheme as the first new social program in a generation, and painting himself as a great defender of social programs. His record contradicts that claim:<br><br><br>Announcements<br><br>05 January 2006 Stephen Harper announces plan to Stand up for Security<br>04 January 2006 Stephen Harper pledges action on immigrant credentials<br>03 January 2006 Stephen Harper to follow up on Auditor General's inquiry into polling contracts<br>02 January 2006 Stephen Harper lays out key priorities for Canada<br>29 December 2005 Conservative transit plan will benefit the environment<br>28 December 2005 Conservatives stand up for veterans<br>21 December 2005 Harper Unveils Conservative Commitment to the Family Farm<br>20 December 2005 Stephen Harper hears challenges, solutions for youth at risk<br>14 December 2005 Stephen Harper will initiate reforms to elect senators and set fixed election dates<br>10 December 2005 Stephen Harper Gives Full Support for Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control<br>09 December 2005 Stephen Harper will ensure security for seniors<br>08 December 2005 Stephen Harper promotes education and training for young Canadians<br>07 December 2005 Conservatives release Opportunity Plan for Small Business<br>05 December 2005 Conservatives announce a new Choice in Child Care Allowance<br>02 December 2005 Harper Pledges Patient Wait Times Guarantee<br>01 December 2005 Stephen Harper to cut the GST to five per cent<br>29 November 2005 ONLY CONSERVATIVES CAN DELIVER CHANGE AND ACCOUNTABILITY |

The Conservatives added about one headline each day in the 2006 campaign, and they also obviously left their headlines up for quite some time. On further reading, this strategy was used by the Conservatives throughout the election to effectively demonstrate their developing key messages and record of staying consistent throughout the campaign, while the Liberal and NDP strategy was often to react to the Conservatives announcements. The Liberals and NDP by comparison added multiple headlines to their

splash pages each day, announcing any information that they felt pertinent to the election, but this had the effect of issues not appearing on their website front page as long as the Conservatives' when they were replaced with new headlines.

One would, therefore, expect that the Conservatives would have a higher number of consistently used key words, issue units, and policies reflected in a textual analysis of all three websites, from a purely quantitative perspective—and this is definitely the case.

***Issue Analysis Results: A comparison of the individual party's website content***

Each party's splash pages were analyzed individually to document their choice of online strategies, top issues, and tactical nuances. Table 34 presents a comparison of the issue frequency lists for each website during the first *two weeks* of the 2006 campaign. Table 34 uses the same methodology as that used to analyze the party platforms previously (in chapter five), including eliminating the basic 300 stop words (i.e. words such as articles, pronouns, and prepositions), as well as combining individual issue units, word couplets, and repeating phrases into each table, ordered based on frequency where set issue frames were clearly evident.

One of the first interesting descriptive facts from the data is that Paul Martin was the only party leader to be mentioned less frequently than the party that he led on his party's website. The Conservatives effectively did not even discuss Layton or the NDP during the four-week period, and neither the Conservatives nor the NDP discuss the Bloc Quebecois on their English websites. Interestingly, the NDP site targeted Martin more than Harper during this four week period; however, the limited information provided on their splash page effectively reduced their message when compared to their competitors.

| Table 34: Issue Units on the Party Campaign Home Page 2006 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | | **Liberals** | | **NDP** | |
| **Keyword** | **Freq.** | **Keyword** | **Freq.** | **Keyword** | **Freq.** |
| Harper | 316 (0.0239) | prime minister | 56 (0.0154) | Layton | 67 (0.0315) |
| Stephen Harper | 237 (0.0178) | martin | 53 (0.0145) | NDP | 44 (0.0207) |
| conservatives | 177 (0.0133) | Harper | 45 (0.0123) | Jack | 42 (0.0197) |
| martin | 103 (0.0077) | Paul | 34 (0.0093) | Canada | 20 (0.0094) |
| Canada | 84 (0.0063) | Stephen | 31 (0.0085) | martin | 18 (0.0085) |
| Canadian | 84 (0.0063) | liberal | 28 (0.0077) | liberals | 12 (0.0056) |
| GST | 74 (0.0056) | Canada | 26 (0.0071) | border | 7 (0.0033) |
| Ottawa | 71 (0.0053) | conservative | 25 (0.0069) | action | 6 (0.0028) |
| cut | 67 (0.0050) | tax | 25 (0.0069) | Canadian | 6 (0.0028) |
| care | 65 (0.0049) | plan | 23 (0.0063) | debate | 6 (0.0028) |
| crime | 64 (0.0048) | family | 18 (0.0047) | Paul | 6 (0.0028) |
| seniors | 63 (0.0047) | change | 17 (0.0047) | conservatives | 5 (0.0024) |
| change | 59 (0.0044) | leader | 16 (0.0044) | Harper | 5 (0.0024) |
| priorities | 59 (0.0044) | care | 15 (0.0041) | health care | 5 (0.0024) |
| liberals | 58 (0.0044) | climate | 15 (0.0041) | Quebec | 5 (0.0024) |
| accountability | 56 (0.0042) | government | 15 (0.0041) | accountability | 4 (0.0019) |
| Paul | 56 (0.0042) | marriage | 13 (0.0036) | gun | 4 (0.0019) |
| child | 55 (0.0041) | notwithstanding | 13 (0.0036) | income | 4 (0.0019) |
| government | 53 (0.0040) | child | 10 (0.0027) | investigations | 4 (0.0019) |
| plan | 51 (0.0038) | gun | 10 (0.0027) | pollution | 4 (0.0019) |
| senators | 50 (0.0038) | right | 10 (0.0027) | trust | 4 (0.0019) |
| liberal | 49 (0.0037) | same sex | 10 (0.0027) | Afghanistan | 3 (0.0014) |
| wait times | 42 (0.0032) | world | 10 (0.0027) | Bloc | 0 |
| Canadians | 41 (0.0031) | Atlantic | 9 (0.0025) | | |
| public | 40 (0.0030) | Canadian | 9 (0.0025) | | |
| choice | 37 (0.0028) | commitment | 9 (0.0025) | | |
| prosecutions | 37 (0.0028) | debate | 9 (0.0025) | | |
| drug | 36 (0.0027) | global | 9 (0.0025) | | |
| education | 36 (0.0027) | business | 8 (0.0022) | | |
| tough | 36 (0.0027) | seniors | 8 (0.0022) | | |
| boost | 34 (0.0026) | Vancouver | 8 (0.0022) | | |
| control | 34 (0.0026) | Canadians | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| childcare | 33 (0.0025) | Clinton | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| taxes | 33 (0.0025) | control | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| forces | 32 (0.0024) | cost | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| family | 19 (0.0014) | icebreakers | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| Bloc | 0 | opposition | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| Layton | 0 | performance | 7 (0.0019) | | |
| NDP | 0 | Layton | 4 (0.0005) | | |
| | | Bloc | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| **NOTE:** The relative frequency appears as the coefficient in parentheses. The coefficient is calculated, as was described above previously (and in chapters one and five), using the following formula: [$x_i = \Sigma_i / n$]. | | | | | |

The issue lists above demonstrate the "living" dynamic nature of the website during the horse race as compared to the static platforms. For instance, the Liberals' top issues

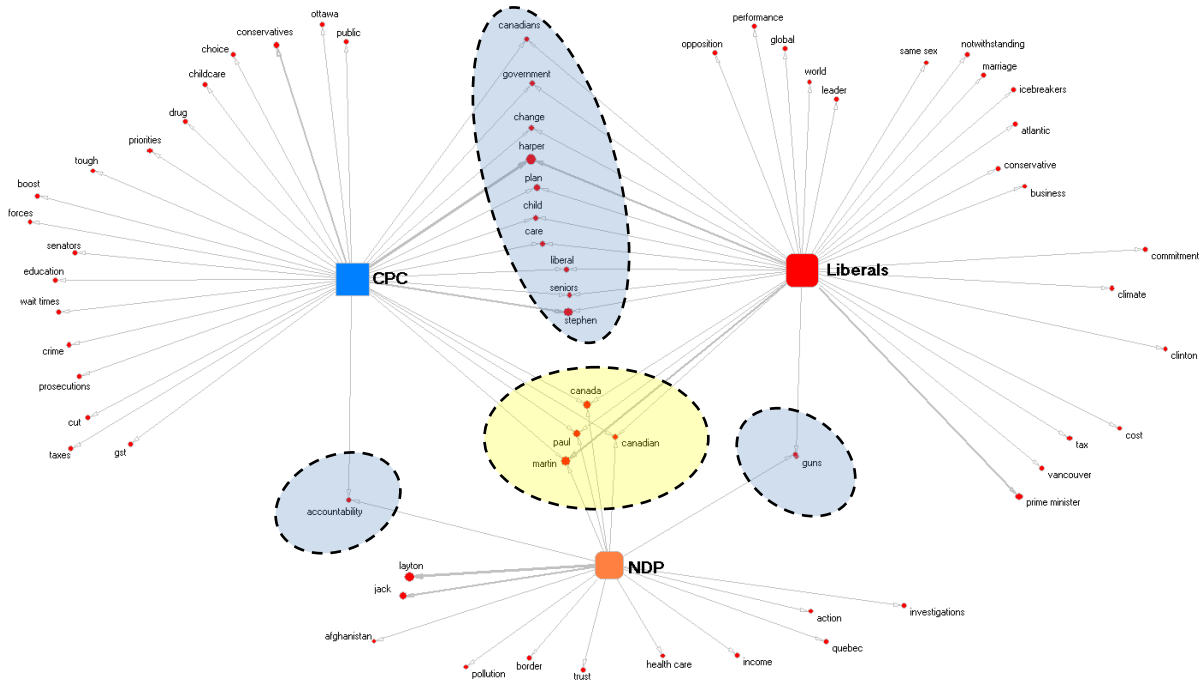
included strategic choices like the notwithstanding clause possibly being used by the Conservatives again and focusing on gun control; neither of these issues was predominant in the platform analysis (see chapter five). In contrast, the Conservative website focused on party supporter favorites like cutting the “GST” and “accountability”. The NDP also was pulled into talking about gun control on their website, when the issue was not predominantly present in their platform.

Overall, it is clear that the language identified by the HyperPo analysis supports the issue frames found in the platforms described in the previous chapter, in that similar issues were used to create a party-leader agenda, without identifying individual party candidates or incumbent Cabinet ministers. The website analysis also reflected, however, the overall campaign attacks on rivals, more so than the platforms did, thereby demonstrating each party tried to frame their key platform issues online in terms of differentiation through the voter choice model. The research shows that the online forum is slanted towards negativity as the leader-target-issue is repeated in the above Table 34, which perhaps suggests an advantage for the opposition in targeting the incumbent power if weaknesses present themselves during a race. The key difference here is that this analysis comes directly from the partisan online sources and can be conducted nearly as soon as the document is posted online.

Using another tool in tandem with HyperPo’s datasets, RéseauLu software helped to better visualize how each party chose to discuss certain policy platforms over others during the election. RéseauLu is a database visualization tool that graphically describes connections among different sets of relationally linked data. In this case, the sets of data were each party’s issue units scraped from their websites. Figure 11 below is a RéseauLu

visualization of the key issues each party website represented up to and including the *second week* of the campaign, using the data in Table 34 above.

**Figure 11: RéseauLu Visualization of the Top Party Issues Pre-Holiday Period 2006**




The blue-shaded spheres in the RéseauLu infographic depict the issues two parties shared before the holiday period, and the yellow-shaded sphere depicts the issues shared by all three parties. The unique individual issues that appear prior to the holiday break in Figure 11 may not be surprising given the discussion above; for example, the Liberals discussed "same sex" marriage and the "notwithstanding" clause, while both the Conservatives and the NDP listed "accountability" as a top issue.

This visualization can be compared with the final frames that dominated at the end of the campaign in 2006. Figure 12 below is a RéseauLu visualization of the key issues each party website represented in the four week period selected for this analysis.

**Figure 12: RéseauLu Visualization of the Top Party Issues Overall 2006**

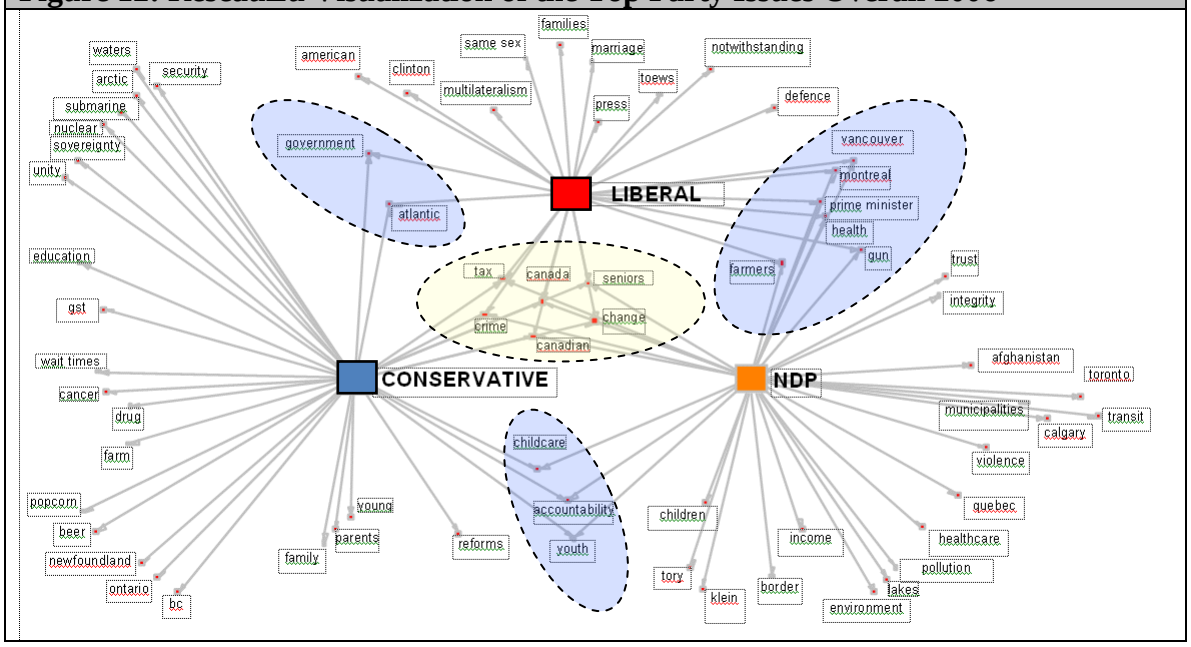



Figure 12 again helps to quickly identify the main issues that all three parties covered during the election after Christmas: “change”, “crime”, “seniors”, and “tax” (see the yellow-shaded sphere in Figure 12). By using HyperPo’s Key Word In Context (KWIC) tool, partisan issue use could be quickly differentiated in the data samples; for example, the term “tax” was dominantly linked with the “GST” debate and the child care tax credit offered by the Conservatives.

It is also interesting to note that, as Paul Wells stated (2007; see chapter five), the gun issue was discussed before and after Christmas by the Liberals and NDP online, but the Conservatives did not post anything on their home page about the issue, instead they focused their attacks through traditional media by discussing their “tough on crime” agenda. Comparing the two yellow-shaded areas before and after the holiday break, it is clear that the “crime” issue moved to the centre of debate following the Boxing Day Jane Creba shooting in Toronto (on Yonge Street, on December 26, 2005), but how it was

framed was different among the parties (i.e. a “crime” issue for Conservatives; a “public safety” issue for the Liberals and NDP).

The “beer and popcorn” comment made by Liberal communication Scott Reid concerning the Conservative child care tax credit was also visible on the Conservative website, rising to prominence after the holiday break (originally it occurred on December 12, 2005). The Liberal party however never posted any rebuttal on their splash page during the election to the Conservative attack; Scott Reid instead addressed the issue solely via the media.

Several other issue units were framed differently by individual parties. For example, both the Conservatives and the NDP did not use the word “prime minister” linked with their leader’s names on their websites; it was only linked with the incumbent Martin. As well, “accountability” was a focus the Conservatives and NDP shared, but the Liberals did not highlight it online in this period on their main webpage as they did in the embedded fashion in their platform. Lastly, the NDP were the only party to push the “Afghanistan” war into the sphere of agenda items to be highlighted on their website.

Perhaps, the most interesting framing information that the RéseauLu visualization captured was how many issues are missing from the picture. For instance, in the top issues during this period, none of the parties focus on such important topics as aboriginal issues, disabilities, gas prices, immigration, poverty, or women--just to name a few. Each party may have policy documents concerning these issues, but they were not high on the list of agenda items represented online. The question can then be asked were the parties spending any time to stand up for these issues and shop them around with an interested electorate? Why were certain frames favoured over others to target the competitors’

weaknesses?

There are limitations to this approach. For instance, online Internet researchers do not know how many Canadians use the party websites. We cannot assume to know whether or not these online hubs are taking away influence perhaps from the televised leadership debates, or other traditional media in terms of influence, as those means used to be very important for rallying undecided voters because the websites until 2006 were primarily being used as pull mediums (they were not highly interactive as was reviewed previously, but this changed in 2008).

Knowing what is in the picture through the use of textual analysis and visualization tools can only help researchers better understand how to get such issues on the political radar of each party, and possibly also onto their main agendas. As demonstrated above, the digital tools helped to easily and quickly provide feedback--with some minor training--about how each party was constructing their image for the electorate and how the parties were differentiating themselves from one another.

The Conservatives' and the NDP's 2006 online strategies both mirrored their platforms to strong degrees. The Conservatives in terms of forwarding their five priorities, and the NDP in terms of supporting their common key issues of child care, health care, and the environment. The Conservatives also shared the least number of issues with the other parties online, with the main shared issue being with NDP in terms of targeting the Liberals on "accountability".

The Conservatives went a bit further than their platform by developing their hawkish security frames online and forwarding artic sovereignty. They also went after the Liberals on the "beer and popcorn" comment, but avoided touching the "gun" issue after

the Toronto holiday tragedy, which demonstrates a high level of awareness to the middle class family voters they were targeting based on focus groups and polling; this focus contrasted sharply with the blatantly reactionary positions of the Reform party days where candidates would speak openly on the issues without following their leader.

The Liberals avoided discussing their problematic issues of accountability and then the "beer and popcorn" comment on their website. They instead targeted the Conservatives on same-sex marriage, an issue that would end up not galvanizing the top support of middle class families in an election on values, especially when the Conservatives did not take the bait to make it an election issue. The Liberals shared the "gun" issue with the NDP, but again the Conservatives silence on the issue played against the Liberals in the media.

These strategies demonstrate that the election campaign website is a fundamentally different kind of medium than the election platform. The Conservatives evidently commanded an early confidence in using the medium to shape their messages on the campaign trail, keeping their base interested through updates on the campaigns progress, while also attracting new voters in the 2006 election through their consistent messaging. Similarly, the NDP's strategy added to their clean campaign image that was meant to contrast with the two larger national big-business-funded political parties. The Liberals' strategies, on the other hand, obviously did not help set their long-term agenda, and instead reflected a leader that was searching for issues outside of the platform to attract voters, having lost control of his agenda.

***2008 Issues Analysis***

For 2008, the sample was built from the captured newsfeeds during the five week campaign from September 7th to October 14th, 2008. The general sample information for each party's newsfeed website is presented in Table 35 below. From the basic information collected in Table 35, the fact that the Conservatives used their website to present the greatest amount of information is once again evident. The Liberal website did not offer teaser text along with their newsfeed headlines, which is reflected in their having the lowest number of unique words used of the three parties.

| **Table 35: Sample Information 2008** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Conservatives** | **Liberals** | **NDP** |
| **Sample entries (Days)** | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| **Total words (Tokens)** | 2882 | 1233 | 2161 |
| **Unique words (Types)** | 915 | 473 | 755 |
| **Highest word frequency** | 114 | 61 | 70 |
| **Splash page news stories posted** | 98 | 89 | 78 |

Overall, Table 35 demonstrates that the rate of online party news delivery still averaged about 2-3 stories a day in 2008, remaining roughly consistent with the 2004 and 2006 campaigns. What changed though was the number of other technological media channels that were now sending out the stories, sometimes at the same rate each (as in Section I above). Where 2004 and 2006 websites had only 1-3 channels, the new 2008 websites had 6-10 channels, including the social media tools Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Table 36 below presents the salient issues for the 2008 campaign based on the party website newsfeeds only. Again, none of the dominant issue units captured here reflected any regional narrowcasting of messages. The leader-target-issue pattern appeared again in the 2008 analysis, with the sole exception of the Liberal website mentioning Harper (27 times) more than Dion (21 times). The Conservative website targeted the Liberals on

their “risky” Green Shift plan, and campaigned on Harper’s “leadership” being the best for the economy. The election boiled down to the Liberals’ “carbon tax”, versus Harper’s vague commitments to “ensuring health and environmental well-being”.

| Table 36: Issue Units on the Party Campaign Home Page 2008 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | | **Liberals** | | **NDP** | |
| **Keyword** | **Freq.** | **Keyword** | **Freq.** | **Keyword** | **Freq.** |
| conservative | 49 (0.0017) | Harper | 27 (0.0022) | Layton | 60 (0.0028) |
| Dion | 38 (0.0013) | liberal | 23 (0.0019) | Harper | 28 (0.0013) |
| conservatives | 33 (0.0011) | liberals | 22 (0.0018) | Jack Layton | 25 (0.0012) |
| Harper | 32 (0.0011) | Dion | 21 (0.0017) | leader | 24 (0.0011) |
| minister | 30 (0.0010) | Stéphane Dion | 19 (0.0015) | NDP | 20 (0.0009) |
| prime | 26 (0.0009) | Canada | 10 (0.0008) | check | 16 (0.0007) |
| liberal | 25 (0.0009) | Canadians | 10 (0.0008) | fact | 16 (0.0007) |
| economic | 24 (0.0008) | leader | 10 (0.0008) | Dion | 15 (0.0007) |
| Stéphane | 23 (0.0008) | campaign | 9 (0.0007) | plan | 15 (0.0007) |
| Stephen Harper | 23 (0.0008) | Layton | 9 (0.0007) | tax | 15 (0.0007) |
| tax | 23 (0.0008) | NDP | 9 (0.0007) | Stephen | 14 (0.0006) |
| choice | 19 (0.0007) | conservative | 6 (0.0005) | Canadian | 12 (0.0006) |
| economy | 19 (0.0007) | government | 6 (0.0005) | platform | 12 (0.0006) |
| certainty | 18 (0.0006) | inquiry | 6 (0.0005) | billion | 10 (0.0005) |
| plan | 18 (0.0006) | affair | 5 (0.0004) | campaign | 10 (0.0005) |
| families | 17 (0.0006) | Canadian | 5 (0.0004) | families | 10 (0.0005) |
| government | 17 (0.0006) | economy | 5 (0.0004) | prime minister | 10 (0.0005) |
| Canadians | 16 (0.0006) | plan | 5 (0.0004) | Canada | 9 (0.0004) |
| carbon tax | 15 (0.0005) | conservatives | 4 (0.0003) | carbon | 9 (0.0004) |
| Canada | 14 (0.0005) | economic | 4 (0.0003) | liberal | 9 (0.0004) |
| Canadian | 14 (0.0005) | Flaherty | 4 (0.0003) | transit | 8 (0.0004) |
| leadership | 14 (0.0005) | green | 4 (0.0003) | corporate | 7 (0.0003) |
| liberals | 11 (0.0004) | Jack | 4 (0.0003) | care | 6 (0.0003) |
| bloc | 10 (0.0003) | Ontario | 4 (0.0003) | conservative | 6 (0.0003) |
| Ottawa | 10 (0.0003) | platform | 4 (0.0003) | costs | 6 (0.0003) |
| election | 9 (0.0003) | promise | 4 (0.0003) | working | 6 (0.0003) |
| real | 9 (0.0003) | shift | 4 (0.0003) | Afghanistan | 5 (0.0002) |
| risk | 9 (0.0003) | uncosted | 4 (0.0003) | cuts | 5 (0.0002) |
| risky | 9 (0.0003) | Bernier | 3 (0.0002) | liberals | 5 (0.0002) |
| taxes | 9 (0.0003) | concerns | 3 (0.0002) | Ottawa | 5 (0.0002) |
| debt | 7 (0.0002) | Couillard | 3 (0.0002) | Quebec | 5 (0.0002) |
| protect | 6 (0.0002) | crisis | 3 (0.0002) | women | 5 (0.0002) |
| care | 5 (0.0002) | jobs | 3 (0.0002) | accord | 4 (0.0002) |
| global | 5 (0.0002) | launch | 3 (0.0002) | Atlantic | 4 (0.0002) |
| Quebec | 5 (0.0002) | prime | 3 (0.0002) | attacks | 4 (0.0002) |
| strong | 5 (0.0002) | Ritz | 3 (0.0002) | Canadians | 4 (0.0002) |
| benefits | 4 (0.0001) | vote | 3 (0.0002) | choice | 4 (0.0002) |
| New Brunswick | 4 (0.0001) | aboriginal | 2 (0.0002) | death | 4 (0.0002) |
| crime | 4 (0.0001) | action | 2 (0.0002) | environment | 4 (0.0002) |
| critical | 4 (0.0001) | arts | 2 (0.0002) | first | 4 (0.0002) |
| help | 4 (0.0001) | attack | 2 (0.0002) | increase | 4 (0.0002) |
| Jim Flaherty | 4 (0.0001) | bombing | 2 (0.0002) | jobs | 4 (0.0002) |
| Lawrence | 4 (0.0001) | country | 2 (0.0002) | Oshawa | 4 (0.0002) |

| Table 36: Issue Units on the Party Campaign Home Page 2008 (Cont'd) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conservatives** | | **Liberals** | | **NDP** | |
| **Keyword** | **Freq.** | **Keyword** | **Freq.** | **Keyword** | **Freq.** |
| north | 4 (0.0001) | cuts | 2 (0.0002) | Stéphane | 4 (0.0002) |
| Ontario | 4 (0.0001) | deal | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| opposition | 4 (0.0001) | election | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| protecting | 4 (0.0001) | environment | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| results | 4 (0.0001) | farmers | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| scheme | 4 (0.0001) | food | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| support | 4 (0.0001) | fund | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| threatens | 4 (0.0001) | immigration | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| uncertainty | 4 (0.0001) | India | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| | | invest | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| | | listeriosis | 2 (0.0002) | | |
| | | marijuana | 2 (0.0002) | | |

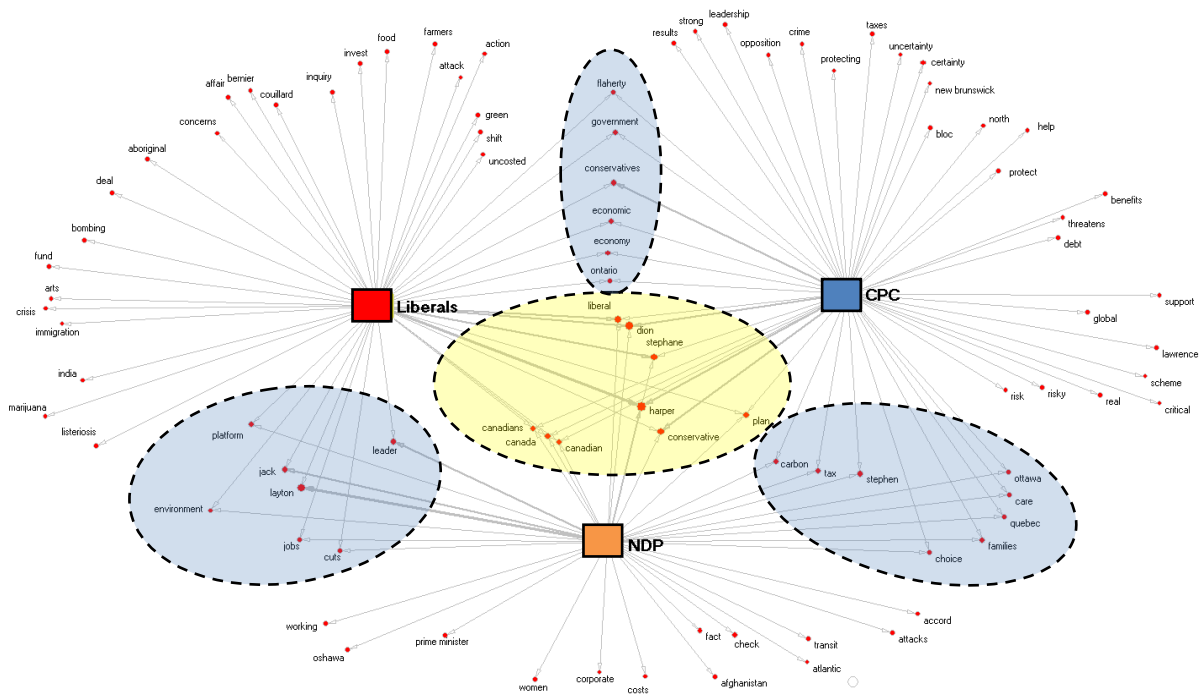
Gomery and the Sponsorship Scandal were gone from the salient issues in the online newsfeeds of 2008, as was "accountability". The Conservatives did not even discuss the environment in their newsfeed headlines and teaser texts, instead they focused on the "carbon tax" frame, while both the Liberals and NDP offered environmental focuses. The Liberals attempted to target the widest number of possible issue units online, while arguably to their detriment they ignored attacking the NDP until later in the campaign, in an election where they lost 18 seats, mostly to the Conservatives through vote splitting among the Liberals and NDP.

Notably, the NDP online campaign tried to frame Jack Layton as a future "prime minister", which was again consistent with the NDP platform. A majority of the uses of the title were linked or co-occurring with Layton's name on the party website in 2008, rather than Harper's. The NDP gained seven seats in the election, and the major shift in their framing strategies could be viewed as one key factor in this outcome, along with the falling fortunes of the Liberal campaign.

Figure 13 below is a RéseauLu visualization of the data presented in Table 36 above. The RéseauLu visualization demonstrates that the Conservatives and the NDP

both assaulted the Liberals on the carbon tax issue. The Conservative campaign was not as focused as the frames presented in their 2006 campaign; however, each party clearly demonstrated the differentiation of their issue frames from their opponents in this election – in particular, the Conservatives' and NDP's pigeon-holing of the Dion Liberals' Green Shift plan as risky was definitely reflected in the results of the election as voted for by the Canadian public. Interestingly, Dion and Harper were discussed by all three parties in this election, but the Conservatives still did not discuss Jack Layton using their newsfeeds in 2008, which is similar to their previous two campaigns where they focused solely on the Liberal leader.

**Figure 13: RéseauLu Visualization of the Top Party Issues Overall 2008**




The Conservatives' strategy to attack the Liberals on both sides with the help of the NDP was therefore again represented in the issue differentiation in 2008. Both the Conservatives and NDP championed middle class "families" in their online campaigns, as they did in their platforms, while attacking the Liberals' "carbon tax" as risky during

uncertain economic times. The Conservatives and NDP's web campaigns again aligned closely with their platforms in terms of the range of issue units exhibited.

The Liberals used their website to go after both the Conservatives and the NDP, and included a sweep of extra issues like Listeriosis and marijuana. They attacked the Conservatives on the Bernier and Couillard affair, and went after the NDP's environmental plan. Again, like 2006, neither issue would galvanize the electorate in the Liberals' favour, and the decision to forward the Green Shift made Dion into a lame duck leader unable to set the agenda.

**Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the party online campaign tools, and the language used on the party websites during the three Canadian minority elections of 2004, 2006, and 2008. The issue unit analysis method was employed to identify the top framing messages posted on the three English federal party campaign websites (i.e. the Conservatives, Liberals, and the NDP's). The analysis demonstrated the use of repetitive framing language to differentiate party policies from their competitors. Similar to Lakoff's work on recent U.S. elections in his *Don't Think of an Elephant* (2004), the frames of a "strict father" in the Canadian case aligned more with Stephen Harper's campaign, and the "nurturing" friendlier frame aligned with the Liberals and NDPs, whose messages closely overlapped online in the 2006 and 2008 elections. When we remove the economy as a top issue, the Harper Conservatives' top frames over the three periods included accountability measures, being tough on crime, focusing on national security, and offering tax credits; whereas the Liberal and NDP frames focused on stabilizing health

care spending, childcare programs, and creating a lasting political solution to avoid environmental climate change in 2008.

The RéseauLu visualizations above support the frames analysis that the Conservatives had developed the least number of top overlapping issues for their platforms than any of the other two English parties, which is a form of political differentiation required to communicate a clear agenda (see the blue highlighted areas in Figures 11-13 above). The Conservative "strict parent" issues are plainly visible on the RéseauLu visualizations in their attacks on the Liberals and in their chosen "tough on crime" and "security" frames, while issues that are commonly framed as nurturing parent "social issues" are not directly reflected via the Conservative agenda; instead social issue frames were avoided like those of aboriginals, gas prices, immigration, poverty, same-sex marriage, or women's issues.

The most important findings of this analysis required the recognition that in tracking issues on each party's website, the party materials were entirely the party's own productions and were created using their own strategic framing. Often what was most interesting, especially for interest groups, social movements, and the general public, were the issues and messages that the parties did *not* include on their websites in a repetitive or focused way. In this case, absent or omitted issues frequently included aboriginal issues, disability issues, gas prices, the Gomery inquiry, immigration, poverty, the Sponsorship Scandal, or women's issues, depending on the party.

The identity of the electorate that was defined by the Conservative issues (and lack of particular issue recognition) was one rooted in normative nuclear middle-class family values, instead of a diverse multicultural frame or regional voting blocks. In other

words, the Conservatives' online strategy and overall agenda was stylized as the "strict father" frame, like Karl Rove's style of Republican politics, rather than the "nurturing parent" of the closely related frames of the Liberals or NDP in the Canadian context. The Liberals and NDP will have to take a better look at their own tactics in order to win the next federal election given that the old Bush camp's strategies of communication were evidently being used online by the Conservatives to shape Canada's political culture.

By way of summary, the list of key factors for successful minority governments can be read into the websites to better understand agenda-setting online during the 2004-2008 elections:

1. **Executive Style:** The websites, like the party platforms, again demonstrated the centralization of party materials under the image of the leader, and was framed from the perspective of a prime minister that will achieve a majority and go it alone. Again, the issue analysis above demonstrated that not surprisingly the Liberals and the NDP frequently shared key issues. In this way, Harper's online agendas from 2004-2008 reflected his monarchical style of going it alone, while Martin and Dion's websites lent themselves to brokering deals with the NDP in a collaborative manner if needed.

2. **Framing the Agenda (i.e. the dominant problem, politics, and policy stream issue):** The most successful uses of the Web during the 2004-2011 period were the Harper Conservatives' in terms of actually framing what the government would accomplish with its five priorities in 2006, and staying on the Green Shift attack in 2008. The NDP also used the Web to differentiate their frames successfully, but their attacks on the Liberals inevitably helped the Conservatives as well.

3. **Institutional Factors (i.e. support in Cabinet and the House):** Like the platforms, the websites did not reflect institutional factors such as representing Cabinet members or the House. Jim Flaherty was attacked in 2008 for his last budget before the election was called, but beyond that, the website home pages made few or no mentions of other party candidates or Cabinet ministers, which

again made them a centralizing medium that reflects the incumbent PMO's views of the political climate to construct the prime minister as the face of the party.

4. **Media Technologies:** The websites as a technology are summarized in more detail below as they are the main change to agenda-setting in this period, and they therefore require more analysis in terms of both how they are used by political parties and the methods used to analyze them.

In terms of technological evolution, the digital media channels employed to distribute the words and messages of the federal parties demonstrated a pull medium following a public relations, propaganda, and persuasion function of message control, rather than that of participatory democracy techniques provided by Web 2.0 functions such as social bookmarking and open source debate forums. The official party uses of Web 2.0 tools would have to wait until the 2008 election, but even then moderated forums and wikis were only used by the Green party, and not by the top three national English-speaking Canadian parties.

This analysis identified that the websites functioned like living dynamic platforms during the campaign, supplementing the party's agenda as the horse race ensued. Only four key issues were commonly represented in the key 2006 election that saw the end of Liberal power; across all three major English-speaking federal parties' home sites the shared issue units were: "change", "crime", "seniors", and "tax" (specifically, the goods and services tax, because of the Conservatives focus on cutting it). Also, the Conservatives' online communication strategy was noticeably different from the Liberal and NDP's during the 2006 campaign, in that the latter two parties often reacted to the Conservative party's message and initiatives, while choosing not to reinforce their own messages above the Conservatives', even though the Liberals were the incumbent power.

This tactic led to Stephen Harper's name and messages gaining more resonance on the other party's websites than the other leaders; the evidence of this tactic supports and reflects the Conservatives' capacity to functionally frame and set the agenda of the debate in 2006 and 2008.

To date, only the Liberal party responded to requests for information about the number of hits received by their home page, stating firmly that "the information is sensitive" (Simpson, 2006). In other words, none of the parties shared their usage statistics or the tools they used to track their campaigns online; however, the Liberals did state that they definitely know how many people visit their home page during the election campaigns and that they do track their website usage. From this example and the above textual analysis, a great need is demonstrated for more research into how online texts are delivered, framed, and interpreted by the electorate (the latter is not studied herein).

A major concern for tracking online research was identified in the fact that political parties can change and adapt their online signifiers quickly, and with ease, across media based on instant analysis of the climate of current electoral political cultures. They can update, delete, or re-write the frame as needed on their own website (e.g. the Conservatives taking down their Stéphane Dion Attack Ads in the 2008 elections, which the Infoscape Research Lab archived and saved and then reposted to YouTube).

Using the new digital methods described above, the breadth of partisan rhetoric was identified clearly as parties attempted to situate voters within their chosen frames. Careful analysis of Web presence revealed strategies and key issues not apparent on a surface reading of the party websites because HyperPo's capabilities for quickly creating

frequency lists and concordances of electronic texts offered an on-the-spot, nearly instantaneous content analysis of the large digitized corpora, methods that were not available just a scant decade ago.

Researchers can now use such new digital tools to track how successful agendas are developed online, and how parties stay on track or are derailed by other parties, media criticism, and voter expectations. No single suite of issue network and framing tracking tools has yet been developed, but the methods exist now for nearly automating what Kingdon's agenda-setting theory described. In essence, his three streams of problem, politics, and policy have been an apt metaphor waiting to be linked with the information streams concept of the 21st century.

Researchers can in particular track the framing language of political parties' agendas and platforms online and in the media. The use of experimental methods and new software packages does not replace the need for other types of traditional social research such as audience analysis, ethnography, polling, or quantitative studies of website usability. In fact, these new methods and tools complement and extend the previous ones, in a very McLuhan-esque way, where the technological prosthesis of the Internet becomes "a new natural resource":

> technological media are staples or natural resources, exactly as are coal and cotton and oil. Anybody will concede that society whose economy is dependent upon one or two major staples like cotton, or grain, or lumber, or fish, or cattle is going to have some obvious social patterns of organization as a result. Stress on a few major staples creates extreme instability in the economy but great endurance in the population […]. A society configured by reliance on a few commodities accepts them as a social bond quite as much as the metropolis does the press. Cotton and oil, like radio and TV, become "fixed charges" on the entire psychic life of the community. And this pervasive fact creates the unique cultural flavor of any society. It pays through the nose and all its other senses for each staple that shapes its life. (McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 1964, p. 21)

The fact that the Web is now a normative, and increasingly naturalized, resource for a large portion of the Canadian electorate is important to remember, because it is becoming a main source for the public's information, albeit controlled and framed by the political elite through their websites in the case described above.

One can even imagine in the near future that an open source software application, offering a suite of monitoring e-tools, will be made available to the media and the public, whereby issues, their frames, public polls, and media sources are all tracked side-by-side with demographic information to hone in on what Kingdon called the "national mood" as expressed in the problem, political, and policy streams.[20] CNN used such new monitoring tools based on demographics to present complex infographics in 2008 presidential election to breakdown the large voting population by ethnicity, region, religion, and other such social strata. The future of media frames analysis may already be here, but not for the average citizen, only large media conglomerates.

Overall, the issue network methods were used here to identify the pool of issues for the three elections, allowing for a pool of issues that can be tracked and compared in the following chapters. Identifying the salience of these issues in other agenda documents is the next step of this research to understand how the party agenda was enacted through each minority prime minister's speeches. The intention for using experimental methods to analyze the websites of the political parties was to select issues to study in other political documents, and also to evaluate the communication strategies of the major English-speaking political parties. Tools like HyperPo and the proprietary RéseauLu visualization software provided quick and easy means of analyzing the captured e-documents. Indeed,

[20] This type of suite of monitoring tools would be similar to what Michael Lewis discussed in terms of the tools used to track baseball statistics in *Money Ball* (2003), which changed the business of professional baseball

solving the two main methodological problems described above would not have been possible without those tools.

## Chapter Seven
## Agenda Setting through PM Speeches in the Internet Age: A Measure of Effectiveness

> As time has passed, I have been aghast at what the Harper government has done in walking away from the Kelowna Accord, our child-care agreements, and our role in the world. I have also been deeply troubled by the degree to which this government has been willing to put at risk the fiscal achievements of the previous decade.
> – Paul Martin, *Hell or High Water* (2009, p. 457)

> Canadians are concerned about their jobs, paying their bills, saving for their kids' education, and planning for their retirement. Small business owners are struggling, communities are hurting, and young people are worried about the future. I understand these real challenges Canadian families face. That's why we launched Canada's Economic Action Plan, which contains our stimulus measures to help Canadian families and businesses get through the worst of the crisis, and to lay the groundwork for our economy to emerge stronger than ever.
> – Stephen Harper, "Canada's Action Plan at Work" (Speech, 2009, June 11)

This chapter analyzes how federal Speeches from the Throne and the prime minister's official addresses attempted to set the policy agenda during the third extended minority government period of 2004-2011. The contrasting executive styles of each prime minister are represented in these official PMO agenda-setting communications. The textual analyses of these communications demonstrate how the Martin and Harper teams coordinated their communications along with their platforms and electoral websites, and then assesses their success in doing so.

In the analysis, Martin's speeches did not register in terms of a strictly defined agenda when compared to the "bag of issues" identified in chapters five and six. By comparison, consistent uses of language were evident in Harper's speeches that were used to sell his "Five Priorities" agenda in 2006. A shift in agenda-setting language occurred in Harper's Throne Speech in 2009 and onward, demonstrating a through line to the Conservative Economic Action Plan policies that Harper had to push through the

House during the recession that were influenced by the opposition parties in the language of stimulus and fiscal responsibility for stabilizing the economy through job plans and money for retraining workers.

In the objects studied, a spectrum of agenda-setting tactics is evident from the broad agendas of 2004 and early 2008, to the focused Harper agenda of 2006-2008, which is a definite standout among the three English-speaking parties during the minority government era. The insight gained from this research is that if agenda-setting skills are now a dominant component of new media politicking, then Canadians have come to respect and support political leaders who do what they say they are going to do. In practice though, prime ministerial language must shift during minority government to adapt to the "political stream" (as Kingdon's model described), as it did when Harper's agenda turned to the language of "stimulus" and "deficits" in 2008, responding to pressure from the opposition parties and the reality of the economic downturn. In 2008, the Harper Conservatives' language also shifted away from the talk of national party subsidies and its original intentions of implementing an austerity budget.

The main turning point in the Conservatives' switch in rhetoric was their solution to the economic downturn, "Canada's Economic Action Plan", and mentions of it dominated from the 2009 Throne Speech until the end of 2011. Throughout the 2006-2011 period, the Conservative communication machine controlled and maintained their agenda more consistently than the Martin/Dion/Ignatieff Liberals. This being said, it is by no means evident that the Conservatives achieved much of their agenda when their communications are compared with the outcomes of their legislation, as was the case

from 2008-2011. Legislation mattered far less than “frames”, it seems, as the 2011 election led to a Conservative majority.

This analysis engages an on-going issue with prime ministerial speeches that others have identified as framing Canadians’ experiences, though little research on how the frames translate into power has been conducted (Cairns, 2007; 2008a; 2008b). In this chapter, the top salient agenda issues identified previously will be compared with the issues set in the federal Throne Speeches to better understand which hypothesis of agenda-setting best describes the past three minority governments (i.e. centralized or decentralized government style; strict or broad agendas; monarchical or collaborative), using the four categories identified previously to understand the factors of successful agenda-setting strategies in minority government: (i) *Executive Style* (i.e. centralized or decentralized), (ii) *Framing the Agenda* (i.e. defining the dominant problem, politics, and policy stream issues), (iii) *Institutional Factors* (i.e. support in Cabinet and the House – did the prime minister go it alone, or did they broker power?), and (iv) *Media Technologies* (i.e. were changes in technology used to set the agenda effectively?).

## I. Speeches from the Throne and their Media Coverage 2004-2011

> Other speechwriters for other presidents have written about fierce turf battles in the White House over phrases intended to commit the president to one or another side of an internal ideological struggle, all part of the clearance process through which each speech draft journeys on its way to the president. I was fortunate to face no clearance process and no ideological struggle. In another White House, the domestic policy advisor would rewrite the speech; in the Kennedy White House, my previous eight years with the senator qualified me to be the domestic policy advisor. In some White Houses, speechwriters have to cope with senior staff members slipping in their own pet issues; in the Kennedy White House, I *was* the senior staff member.
>
> - Ted Sorensen (2009, p. 133), former JFK speechwriter

Canada does not have an equivalent to Ted Sorenson's "insider account" of speech writing for chief political executives (e.g. 1965; 2009). Sorenson (May 8, 1928-October 31, 2010) is famous for crafting one of the most repeated political speech phrases in history as part of JFK's inaugural address: "Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country" (January 20, 1961). Before his recent passing, Sorenson appeared on an edition of TVO's *The Agenda*, entitled "Why Are There No Great Canadian Political Speeches?" (2010), where he and other panel members debated the merits of good speech writing and selected a few of the top Canadian political speeches.

The panel argued that good speech writing is based on the collaboration between a strong leader and a writer whom the leader knows well enough to safely harness the leader's attributes in the writing process through identifying key words and phrases that represent that leader's principles and ideals, thereby translating them into a clear message to the people in a time of need. The top Canadian speeches they chose using these criteria included Trudeau's War Measures Act speech (October 16, 1970), and his gunslinger Liberal convention speech (June 14, 1984), along with Rene Levesque "See you next

time" speech after the national referendum on May 20, 1980. None of these speeches was given during a minority government period.

The TVO Agenda panel concluded that Canada's culture was one of self-effacement that does not celebrate speeches as compared to other countries that celebrate its leader's accomplishments, but they also believed few Canadians understand their history well enough in terms of sharing common historical referents to bind the country together in one unified narrative, like the U.S. in terms of its singular melting pot patriotism. Perhaps, Jack Layton's final letter to Canadians will be viewed as one Canadian addition to political communication, as his words received international attention amidst great public mourning after his death: "Love is better than anger. Hope is greater than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world" (August 20, 2011).

Beyond those few honourable mentions, the closest works that Canadians have to Ted Sorenson's insights into speech writing are prime minister's autobiographies, and possibly those recorded in chapter four, such as from press secretary's Keith Davey (1986), Patrick Gossage (1987), and Thomas Kent (1988). Cairns lamented this apparent gap that exists between political science and media studies in "Bringing Parliament to the People: A Meditated-Politics Approach to the Speech from the Throne" (2007); he argued that the gap was identified as far back as 1984 by Wallace and Fletcher, where speech writing had only been analyzed from its role in parliamentary policy, not from the wider media lens of how its rituals are enacted and have been transformed over time.

Cairns found that neither the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* nor *Canadian Parliamentary Review* had ever published an article with "The Speech from the Throne"

in its title. His work analyzed the Speech from the Throne as it was represented in newspapers for the Ontario Legislature from 1900-2007. He identified the transformation of the event in the media, from a time when the media focused on the pageantry and festival-like atmosphere at Queen's Park in the early modern era, devoting pages to the presence and fashion of Toronto's upper class, to the closed hypermediated event it has since become, with the public and protestors kept outside of Queen's Park's protected bubble, and the media now focusing mainly on the speech's content, rather than the "mediated publicness" of the event (Cairns, 2007, p. 3).

Cairns offered a typical definition of the Speech from the Throne taken directly from political science textbooks: the Speech from the Throne is a concise statement designed to outline the government's legislative intentions for the upcoming session, written by the prime minister and passed by the cabinet, that is read by the governor general as a part of a constitutionally required ceremony that begins each new session of Parliament (Cairns, 2007, p. 3). Cairns used media studies to understand the functions of the Throne Speeches beyond this typical definition by including an analysis of how the media surrounding the event has changed over the years, thereby reflecting cultural and institutional changes. He identified three streams of common thought on the Throne Speech's key significant roles in politics: (i) the administration of Parliament, (ii) a ceremonial function of the Crown, (iii) the government's (explicit and hidden) agenda, and using a "mediated publicness" perspective, he also added (iv) the construction and reinforcement of media audiences. Cairns argued that this last category, based on a mediated publicness perspective, offered more possibilities for scholars in terms of the

speech's roles from a communication standpoint, through helping to better understand the cultural significance of the event over time:

> In contrast to the predictable results of trying to pin down just exactly what the Throne Speech is, a project that works to demonstrate how the Speech has been variously depicted in news coverage thrives in the rich world of ambiguities. It views the Speech as both functional *and* ceremonial, anachronistic *and* relevant, capable of producing both arousal *and* quiescence; it sees policy *and* posturing, plans *and* uncertainties, fears *and* assurances; it notes promises *and* failures, power *and* fragility; past *and* future. (Cairns, 2007, p. 9)

Overall, the media perspective allowed Cairns to better identify the ways that Parliament and the People are frequently at odds with one another, opening the potential for democratic dialogue on enhancing its role in government.

For instance, he found that the contemporary professionalization of the Throne Speech brought with it an unexpected consequence: "namely, greater interest in items absent from the Speech" (Cairns, 2008a, p. 23). He found that media coverage switched in the 1960s and 1970s to included greater scrutiny of the issues within Throne Speech, which brought along with it two key changes:

> First, increasingly aggressive news conference questions force the government to account for its Throne Speech in ways not demanded by parliamentary procedure. It should be mentioned, however, that news conferences also furnish the government with an unprecedented public forum in which to promote legislative plans. Second, from the perspective of partisan politics, the news conference establishes what the House itself does not—namely, an opening-day platform for criticism from members of the parliamentary opposition. (Cairns, 2008a, p. 23).

In this way, Cairns's work began a discussion for how to reconceptualize the government's use of the Throne Speech by including the media perspective.

In terms of the speech's content, he stated, "Many (albeit, not necessarily all) of the same points recur throughout what could only by hyperbole be called *the literature on the Speech from the Throne*; therefore, a useful way of analyzing statements on the

Speech is to identify the broader context within which such words have been uttered" (Cairns, 2007, p. 3). He is convincing in his summary: few of the key agenda issue units are uttered in any meaningful or repetitive way in the federal Throne Speech as the following analysis demonstrates. The hyperbole of the speech missed nuances of the messaging that the platform and website analyses captured previously, and the communication can be viewed more as a watered-down version of the platform in our contemporary period.

Cairns' analyses did not examine the Throne speeches from an agenda-setting perspective; similarly, he did not delve into a framing analysis during minority government periods comparing the platforms and websites of the political party's communications. Others have recently begun to analyze the Throne Speech using textual analysis and quantitative measures internationally (Laver, Benoit & Garry, 2003), and provincially (Imbeau, 2005), to assess the key issues in the Throne Speech. Budget Speeches have also been analyzed, demonstrating that speeches quantitatively cluster together depending on two factors, (i) the leader's executive style, and (ii) the issue units for a cultural period (Dutil, Ryan & Gossignac, 2010; Gosciniak, 2005).

The following analyses of the Throne Speeches are organized by the parliamentary sessions during the Martin and Harper minority governments:

1. **38th Parliament (Martin, October 4, 2004 – November 29, 2005):**
   1st Session - October 4, 2004 – November 29, 2005

2. **39th Parliament (Harper, April 3, 2006 – September 7, 2008):**
   1st Session - April 3, 2006 – Sept 14, 2007
   2nd Session - Oct 16, 2007 – Sept 7, 2008

3. **40th Parliament (Harper, November 18, 2008 – March 26, 2011):**
   1st Session - November 18, 2008 – December 4, 2008
   2nd Session - January 26, 2009 – December 30, 2009
   3rd Session - March 3, 2010 – March 26, 2011

A sample taken from the top three national newspapers by subscription, respectively *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, and *The National Post*, was pulled from Factiva's digital archive one week before and one week after the "Throne Speech". The sample was analyzed to identify the salient issues recorded in them. Were the top issues in the Throne Speeches identified in the media sample? In other words, how effective was the Throne speech in conveying its priorities? Did the media instead discuss priorities raised by the opposition parties?

Table 37 summarizes the total number of articles for each Throne Speech in the sample. Table 37 demonstrates that each paper generally published more articles mentioning the Throne Speech after the event, and there were no wide variations in the amount of coverage across the top three papers. The only clear trend in the data sample was that Harper's "do-over" Throne Speech in 2009 was granted very little newspaper coverage. This fact is explained by the Liberal party's electoral support haven fallen before the holiday break, and the Conservatives' path forward had become clearer well before Harper's first prorogation had come to an end. In other words, in Table 37 the 789 words in total 2009 Throne Speech was barely worth noting, because the following budget was to be the focus of media and Parliament to see what kind of stimulus changes the Economic Action Plan would actually include.

| Table 37: Summary of Newspaper Articles for the Throne Speeches | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **38th Parliament** | | | |
| **Speech Date: October 5, 2004** | **Sept 28 - Oct 4 2004** | **Oct 5 - Oct 12 2004** | **TOTAL** |
| **ARTICLES** | 35 | 101 | 136 |
| GLOBE AND MAIL | 14 | 39 | 53 |
| NATIONAL POST | 4 | 22 | 26 |
| TORONTO STAR | 17 | 40 | 57 |
| **39th Parliament - First Session** | | | |
| **Speech Date: April 4, 2006** | **Mar 29 - Apr 3 2006** | **Apr 4 - Apr 11 2006** | **TOTAL** |
| **ARTICLES** | 24 | 75 | 99 |
| GLOBE AND MAIL | 13 | 26 | 39 |
| NATIONAL POST | 5 | 24 | 29 |
| TORONTO STAR | 6 | 25 | 31 |
| **39th Parliament - Second Session** | | | |
| **Speech Date: October 16, 2007** | **Oct 8 - Oct 15 2007** | **Oct 16 - Oct 23 2007** | **TOTAL** |
| **ARTICLES** | 36 | 123 | 159 |
| GLOBE AND MAIL | 12 | 30 | 42 |
| NATIONAL POST | 6 | 39 | 45 |
| TORONTO STAR | 18 | 54 | 72 |
| **40th Parliament - First Session** | | | |
| **Speech Date: November 19, 2008** | **Nov 11 - Nov 18 2008** | **Nov 19 - Nov 26 2008** | **TOTAL** |
| **ARTICLES** | 12 | 43 | 55 |
| GLOBE AND MAIL | 3 | 19 | 22 |
| NATIONAL POST | 4 | 16 | 20 |
| TORONTO STAR | 5 | 16 | 21 |
| **40th Parliament - Second Session** | | | |
| **Speech Date: January 6, 2009** | **Dec 29 2008 - Jan 5 2009** | **Jan 6 - Jan 13 2009** | **TOTAL** |
| **ARTICLES** | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| GLOBE AND MAIL | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| NATIONAL POST | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| TORONTO STAR | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| **40th Parliament - Third Session** | | | |
| **Speech Date: March 3, 2010** | **Feb 23 - Mar 2 2010** | **Mar 3 - Mar 10 2010** | **TOTAL** |
| **ARTICLES** | 15 | 86 | 101 |
| GLOBE AND MAIL | 5 | 28 | 33 |
| NATIONAL POST | 2 | 19 | 21 |
| TORONTO STAR | 8 | 40 | 48 |
| **NOTE:** The total for the entire sample was 555 articles (Globe and Mail: 190; National Post: 142; Toronto Star: 232). | | | |

The point of the following Throne Speech and media analysis is not to test for bias, nor to conduct a complete content analysis; it is simply to demonstrate whether the government's top frames penetrated into the top media discourse, or conversely if the opposition frames were carried. Again, a thorough content analysis would take far greater

resources, and could still be conducted on the data that exists in the sample. The issue unit analysis instead demonstrates the type and range of rhetoric that dominated in the newspaper media surrounding the Throne Speeches, without recourse to a content analysis, or performing complex regression analyses of language that could include disambiguating word senses or synonyms.

Table 38 shows the issue frequencies found in Paul Martin's 2004 Throne Speech, alongside its media coverage. At 1,969 words, Martin's sole speech was shorter in length than all but Harper's 2009 Throne Speech. Table 38 reveals that the Martin agenda issues of "cities and communities", "first nations", "health care", and "schools" that were identified in his 2004 platform were communicated in the Throne Speech, but few other issues were.

**Table 38: Word Frequency in Martin's Oct. 5th, 2004 Throne Speech (38th Parliament)**

| Oct. 5, 2004 (n = 1,969 words) | | | Week Before (n = 31,151) | | | Week After (n = 78,007) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| the government | 21 | 10.67 | canada | 223 | 7.16 | government | 697 | 8.94 |
| canadians | 16 | 8.13 | government | 211 | 6.77 | canada | 413 | 5.29 |
| throne speech | 10 | 5.08 | martin | 144 | 4.62 | speech | 408 | 5.23 |
| health care | 7 | 3.56 | speech | 130 | 4.17 | martin | 333 | 4.27 |
| families | 6 | 3.05 | throne | 105 | 3.37 | throne | 303 | 3.88 |
| speech from the throne | 6 | 3.05 | canadian | 99 | 3.18 | minister | 213 | 2.73 |
| commitment to | 5 | 2.54 | liberals | 99 | 3.18 | throne speech | 211 | 2.7 |
| her excellency | 5 | 2.54 | harper | 93 | 2.99 | bloc | 200 | 2.56 |
| prime minister | 5 | 2.54 | parliament | 90 | 2.89 | liberals | 188 | 2.41 |
| all canadians | 4 | 2.03 | opposition | 80 | 2.57 | opposition | 180 | 2.31 |
| cities and communities | 4 | 2.03 | throne speech | 78 | 2.5 | election | 169 | 2.17 |
| governor general | 4 | 2.03 | election | 77 | 2.47 | prime | 161 | 2.06 |
| children | 3 | 1.52 | leader | 74 | 2.38 | parliament | 160 | 2.05 |
| first nations | 2 | 1.02 | liberal | 69 | 2.22 | prime minister | 154 | 1.97 |
| the house of commons | 2 | 1.02 | canadians | 58 | 1.86 | liberal | 149 | 1.91 |
| schools | 2 | 1.02 | federal | 56 | 1.8 | ottawa | 149 | 1.91 |
| toronto | 2 | 1.02 | ottawa | 56 | 1.8 | minority | 147 | 1.88 |

| Table 38: Word Frequency in Martin's Oct. 5th, 2004 Throne Speech (Cont'd) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oct. 5, 2004 (n = 1,969 words) | | | Week Before (n = 31,151) | | | Week After (n = 78,007) | | |
| Issue Units | Freq. | Rel. Freq. | Issue Units | Freq. | Rel. Freq. | Issue Units | Freq. | Rel. Freq. |
| | | | kyoto | 52 | 1.67 | leader | 137 | 1.76 |
| | | | minority | 52 | 1.67 | vote | 136 | 1.74 |
| | | | house | 51 | 1.64 | harper | 135 | 1.73 |
| | | | ndp | 51 | 1.64 | federal | 134 | 1.72 |
| | | | prime minister | 56 | 1.8 | conservative | 127 | 1.63 |
| | | | conservatives | 47 | 1.51 | canadian | 121 | 1.55 |
| | | | layton | 47 | 1.51 | amendment | 113 | 1.45 |
| | | | clarkson | 46 | 1.48 | house | 112 | 1.44 |
| | | | governor general | 41 | 1.32 | care | 102 | 1.31 |
| | | | vote | 41 | 1.32 | quebec | 101 | 1.29 |
| | | | conservative | 40 | 1.28 | paul | 100 | 1.28 |
| | | | commons | 36 | 1.16 | canadians | 98 | 1.26 |
| | | | plan | 36 | 1.16 | paul martin | 94 | 1.21 |
| | | | policy | 36 | 1.16 | commons | 88 | 1.13 |
| | | | care | 34 | 1.09 | conservatives | 88 | 1.13 |
| | | | country | 34 | 1.09 | policy | 86 | 1.1 |
| | | | world | 34 | 1.09 | health | 85 | 1.09 |
| | | | tax | 33 | 1.06 | speech from the throne | 84 | 1.08 |
| | | | legislation | 32 | 1.03 | fiscal | 74 | 0.95 |
| | | | paul | 32 | 1.03 | duceppe | 72 | 0.92 |
| | | | health | 31 | 1 | mps | 72 | 0.92 |
| | | | agenda | 30 | 0.96 | ndp | 71 | 0.91 |
| | | | leaders | 30 | 0.96 | economic | 70 | 0.9 |
| | | | mps | 30 | 0.96 | tax | 70 | 0.9 |
| | | | paul martin | 30 | 0.96 | deal | 69 | 0.88 |
| | | | program | 30 | 0.96 | mp | 68 | 0.87 |
| | | | emissions | 29 | 0.93 | confidence | 67 | 0.86 |
| | | | people | 25 | 0.8 | public | 66 | 0.85 |
| | | | defence | 24 | 0.77 | provinces | 65 | 0.83 |

In contrast to the Throne Speech, the media samples clearly forwarded a wider array of issues units, presenting mentions of some of the opposition leaders before (e.g. Layton and the NDP) and after (e.g. Harper and Duceppe) the event. This pattern was notably only repeated in the media coverage of Harper's troubled 2008 Throne Speech below, otherwise the consistent pattern for a strong government agenda was represented in the

media through the government's issues dominating in the coverage. Issue units, like "defence" and "emissions", that were represented in the media prior to the speech were not actually represented in a dominant way in Martin's Throne Speech (or platform), reflecting the media's speculation of whether or not the Liberals would lean left or right to maintain the confidence of the House. Further, Martin's first Throne Speech was questioned in the media the following week in terms of whether or not a vote of non-confidence would occur ("confidence" appears 67 times).

In fact, the government did almost fall when the Conservatives announced plans to move an amendment to the speech, which was later supported by the Bloc and NDP in a revised version. The October 6 amendment included five additions about (i) a commission to review Employment Insurance premiums, (ii) the reduction of taxes for low income families, (iii) the creation of an independent Parliamentary Budget Office, (iv) the creation of a non-partisan Citizens' Assembly to examine electoral systems, and (v) a House of Commons vote on any continental missile defence treaty.

As Cairns noted, it is interesting to speculate on what issues *did not appear* in the speech or the media in any great detail; for instance the growing questions around accountability, Quebec separatism, and the Sponsorship Scandal did not appear dominantly in the sample.

Martin's lone Throne Speech can best be described as unimaginative and representing his tentative steps into minority government without having yet formalized official support from another opposition party. The description as "lacklustre" is especially true when contrasted with Harper's communications in the following 2006-2008 period.

Harper's first Throne Speech was 2,540 words in length. A shift in tone was readily apparent in terms of the language, where the Harper camp used an assertive "the government will" as a repetitive structure (see Table 39), whereas Martin's speech used "commitment to" repetitively (see Table 38). As expected, the Conservatives' five key platform priorities appeared in the Throne Speech in terms of the issue units "accountability", "child care", "crime", "gst", and "health care".

**Table 39: Word Frequency in Harper's April 4, 2006 Throne Speech (39th Parliament)**

| April 4, 2006 (n = 2,540) | | | Week Before (n = 21,788) | | | Week After (n = 53,455) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| government | 51 | 20.08 | government | 185 | 8.49 | government | 432 | 8.08 |
| canadians | 30 | 11.81 | harper | 133 | 6.10 | canada | 271 | 5.07 |
| canada | 24 | 9.45 | canada | 100 | 4.59 | harper | 252 | 4.71 |
| government will | 18 | 7.09 | child care | 64 | 2.94 | tax | 181 | 3.39 |
| canadian | 15 | 5.91 | conservative | 63 | 2.89 | national | 168 | 3.14 |
| country | 15 | 5.91 | minister | 57 | 2.62 | liberal | 155 | 2.90 |
| people | 14 | 5.51 | parliament | 54 | 2.48 | throne speech | 126 | 2.36 |
| work | 14 | 5.51 | first | 50 | 2.29 | child | 100 | 1.87 |
| parliament | 12 | 4.72 | new | 49 | 2.25 | countries | 97 | 1.81 |
| new | 11 | 4.33 | liberal | 45 | 2.07 | conservative | 96 | 1.80 |
| help | 10 | 3.94 | national | 45 | 2.07 | conservatives | 95 | 1.78 |
| support | 10 | 3.94 | mr harper | 44 | 2.02 | election | 91 | 1.70 |
| world | 10 | 3.94 | throne speech | 44 | 2.02 | child care | 89 | 1.66 |
| communities | 9 | 3.54 | liberals | 43 | 1.97 | liberals | 87 | 1.63 |
| families | 9 | 3.54 | priorities | 43 | 1.97 | party | 85 | 1.59 |
| stronger | 9 | 3.54 | canadian | 42 | 1.93 | stephen | 84 | 1.57 |
| the world | 8 | 3.15 | tax | 41 | 1.88 | ottawa | 83 | 1.55 |
| federation | 6 | 2.36 | toronto | 41 | 1.88 | prime minister | 82 | 1.53 |
| tax | 6 | 2.36 | conservatives | 40 | 1.84 | provinces | 82 | 1.53 |
| trust | 6 | 2.36 | house | 40 | 1.84 | stephen harper | 82 | 1.53 |
| accountability | 5 | 2.36 | countries | 37 | 1.70 | opposition | 81 | 1.52 |
| government will work | 5 | 1.97 | election | 37 | 1.70 | canadian | 80 | 1.50 |
| canadian people | 4 | 1.57 | ottawa | 37 | 1.70 | federal | 76 | 1.42 |
| child care | 4 | 1.57 | mps | 36 | 1.65 | canadians | 75 | 1.40 |
| crime | 4 | 1.57 | quebec | 36 | 1.65 | crime | 68 | 1.27 |
| democratic | 4 | 1.57 | opposition | 35 | 1.61 | quebec | 67 | 1.25 |
| health care | 4 | 1.57 | business | 33 | 1.51 | health | 66 | 1.23 |

| Table 39: Word Frequency in Harper's April 4, 2006 Throne Speech (Cont'd) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| April 4, 2006 (n = 2,540) | | | Week Before (n = 21,788) | | | Week After (n = 53,455) | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| members of the house of commons | 4 | 1.57 | stephen | 33 | 1.51 | gst | 65 | 1.22 |
| quebec | 4 | 1.57 | chamber | 32 | 1.47 | income | 64 | 1.20 |
| seek | 4 | 1.57 | country | 31 | 1.42 | parliament | 64 | 1.20 |
| senate | 4 | 1.57 | public | 31 | 1.42 | leader | 61 | 1.14 |
| stronger canada | 4 | 1.57 | stephen harper | 31 | 1.42 | people | 61 | 1.14 |
| service | 4 | 1.57 | federal | 29 | 1.33 | bloc | 60 | 1.12 |
| young people | 4 | 1.57 | agenda | 28 | 1.29 | cut | 60 | 1.12 |
| afghanistan | 3 | 1.18 | cut | 28 | 1.29 | policy | 60 | 1.12 |
| economy | 3 | 1.18 | campaign | 27 | 1.24 | international | 58 | 1.09 |
| gst | 3 | 1.18 | daycare | 27 | 1.24 | tories | 58 | 1.09 |
| provinces and territories | 3 | 1.18 | economic | 27 | 1.24 | martin | 55 | 1.03 |
| security | 3 | 1.18 | international | 27 | 1.24 | priorities | 54 | 1.01 |
| violence | 3 | 1.18 | leader | 27 | 1.24 | plan | 53 | 0.99 |
| women | 3 | 1.18 | minority | 27 | 1.24 | business | 52 | 0.97 |
| | | | provinces | 26 | 1.19 | cuts | 51 | 0.95 |
| | | | prime minister | 26 | 1.19 | ndp | 51 | 0.95 |
| | | | canadians | 24 | 1.10 | fiscal | 50 | 0.94 |
| | | | accountability | 23 | 1.06 | military | 49 | 0.92 |
| | | | five priorities | 23 | 1.06 | afghanistan | 45 | 0.84 |

The media prior to the Throne Speech did not mention any of the opposition parties or leaders in a dominant way, but it certainly mentioned the Conservatives' "five priorities" (23 times). The media after the speech also repeated the Conservatives issue units dominantly, while also mentioning the opposition parties, but the media only identified one leader by name, "Martin" (55 times), as he had announced that he was resigning as Liberal party leader the day after the election.

In 2007, the dominance of the Conservative five priorities frames continued into the second session of parliament. An interesting switch in the government's tone appeared in Harper's second Throne Speech in that the Conservative team began using the term "our government" (see Table 40 below), displaying more confidence in their

position during the Liberal leadership renewal, whereas previously both Martin and Harper's first Throne Speeches only used "the government".

| **Table 40: Word Frequency in Harper's Oct. 16, 2007 Throne Speech (39th Parliament)** | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Oct. 16, 2007 (n = 4,157)** | | | **Week Before (n = 27,356 )** | | | **Week After (n = 71,221)** | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| government | 82 | 19.64 | government | 185 | 8.49 | government | 432 | 8.08 |
| our government | 52 | 12.45 | harper | 133 | 6.10 | canada | 271 | 5.07 |
| canada | 42 | 10.06 | canada | 100 | 4.59 | harper | 252 | 4.71 |
| our government will | 38 | 9.10 | child care | 64 | 2.94 | tax | 181 | 3.39 |
| canadians | 35 | 8.38 | conservative | 63 | 2.89 | national | 168 | 3.14 |
| country | 16 | 3.83 | minister | 57 | 2.62 | liberal | 155 | 2.90 |
| families | 16 | 3.83 | parliament | 54 | 2.48 | throne speech | 126 | 2.36 |
| world | 14 | 3.35 | liberal | 45 | 2.07 | child | 100 | 1.87 |
| economic | 12 | 2.87 | national | 45 | 2.07 | countries | 97 | 1.81 |
| future | 12 | 2.87 | mr harper | 44 | 2.02 | conservative | 96 | 1.80 |
| help | 12 | 2.87 | throne speech | 44 | 2.02 | conservatives | 95 | 1.78 |
| security | 12 | 2.87 | liberals | 43 | 1.97 | election | 91 | 1.70 |
| people | 11 | 2.63 | priorities | 43 | 1.97 | child care | 89 | 1.66 |
| arctic | 10 | 2.39 | canadian | 42 | 1.93 | liberals | 87 | 1.63 |
| canadian | 10 | 2.39 | tax | 41 | 1.88 | party | 85 | 1.59 |
| continue | 10 | 2.39 | toronto | 41 | 1.88 | stephen | 84 | 1.57 |
| legislation | 10 | 2.39 | conservatives | 40 | 1.84 | ottawa | 83 | 1.55 |
| emissions | 9 | 2.16 | house | 40 | 1.84 | prime minister | 82 | 1.53 |
| ensure | 9 | 2.16 | countries | 37 | 1.70 | provinces | 82 | 1.53 |
| north | 9 | 2.16 | election | 37 | 1.70 | stephen harper | 82 | 1.53 |
| society | 9 | 2.16 | ottawa | 37 | 1.70 | opposition | 81 | 1.52 |
| sovereignty | 9 | 2.16 | mps | 36 | 1.65 | canadian | 80 | 1.50 |
| strategy | 9 | 2.16 | quebec | 36 | 1.65 | federal | 76 | 1.42 |
| trade | 9 | 2.16 | opposition | 35 | 1.61 | canadians | 75 | 1.40 |
| crime | 8 | 1.92 | business | 33 | 1.51 | crime | 68 | 1.27 |
| history | 8 | 1.92 | stephen | 33 | 1.51 | quebec | 67 | 1.25 |
| international | 8 | 1.92 | chamber | 32 | 1.47 | health | 66 | 1.23 |
| national | 8 | 1.92 | country | 31 | 1.42 | gst | 65 | 1.22 |
| plan | 8 | 1.92 | public | 31 | 1.42 | income | 64 | 1.20 |
| communities | 7 | 1.68 | stephen harper | 31 | 1.42 | parliament | 64 | 1.20 |
| development | 7 | 1.68 | federal | 29 | 1.33 | leader | 61 | 1.14 |
| environment | 7 | 1.68 | agenda | 28 | 1.29 | people | 61 | 1.14 |
| global | 7 | 1.68 | cut | 28 | 1.29 | bloc | 60 | 1.12 |
| greenhouse | 7 | 1.68 | campaign | 27 | 1.24 | cut | 60 | 1.12 |
| leadership | 7 | 1.68 | daycare | 27 | 1.24 | policy | 60 | 1.12 |
| | | | economic | 27 | 1.24 | international | 58 | 1.09 |
| | | | international | 27 | 1.24 | tories | 58 | 1.09 |
| | | | leader | 27 | 1.24 | martin | 55 | 1.03 |
| | | | minority | 27 | 1.24 | priorities | 54 | 1.01 |

| Table 40: Word Frequency in Harper's Oct. 16, 2007 Throne Speech (Cont'd) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oct. 16, 2007 (n = 4,157) | | | Week Before (n = 27,356 ) | | | Week After (n = 71,221) | | |
| Issue Units | Freq. | Rel. Freq. | Issue Units | Freq. | Rel. Freq. | Issue Units | Freq. | Rel. Freq. |
| | | | provinces | 26 | 1.19 | plan | 53 | 0.99 |
| | | | prime minister | 26 | 1.19 | business | 52 | 0.97 |
| | | | canadians | 24 | 1.10 | cuts | 51 | 0.95 |
| | | | accountability | 23 | 1.06 | ndp | 51 | 0.95 |
| | | | five priorities | 23 | 1.06 | fiscal | 50 | 0.94 |
| | | | policy | 23 | 1.06 | military | 49 | 0.92 |
| | | | gst | 22 | 1.01 | afghanistan | 45 | 0.84 |

Table 40 demonstrates that the second Conservative Throne Speech added their focuses on Canada's "security" and "sovereignty", which are notably right-leaning issues that appeal to core Conservative voters. As demonstrated in chapters five and six, those issues would become part of their 2008 election platform.

Beyond those additions, the Conservatives' five priorities were covered by issue units like "crime" and "families", with the media continuing discussion of the "five priorities" in the week prior to the Throne Speech (23 mentions). In terms of the five priorities being implemented, their health care wait times funding was included in the 2006 budget, both the child allowance and the cutting of GST were in place by July 1, 2006, and the Federal Accountability Act received Royal Assent on December 12, 2006. Overall, their crime mandate was the lone remaining Conservative election priority that was still in play. This did not stop continued discussion of the five priorities issue units before or after the speech in the media, demonstrating the resonance of those Conservative accomplishments.

Only the Liberals were mentioned alongside the Conservatives dominantly in the media prior to the speech, and afterward each of the opposition parties were mentioned, but none of their leaders, with the exception of "Martin" (55 times), even though Bill Graham was the interim leader until Stéphane Dion was chosen as Martin's replacement

during the Liberals' December 2006 leadership convention. Given these results, it is definitely clear that the Conservatives' coordinated communication strategy was effective in forwarding their "Five Priorities" agenda. The priorities translated throughout the 2006-2008 period, placing the Conservative brand in the lead of all media surrounding the Throne Speech.

This strategic success was not repeated following the 2008 election. The Conservative Throne Speech made no mention of the impending economic "crisis" that was just beginning to be felt in Fall 2008 (see Table 41). The speech focused more specifically on "challenges" (8 mentions).

**Table 41: Word Frequency in Harper's Nov. 19, 2008 Throne Speech (40th Parliament)**

| Nov. 19, 2008 (n = 4252) | | | Week Before (n = 8,910) | | | Week After (n = 33,066) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| government | 69 | 16.23 | government | 71 | 7.97 | government | 230 | 6.96 |
| our government | 36 | 8.47 | canada | 53 | 5.95 | canada | 222 | 6.71 |
| canadians | 32 | 7.53 | harper | 51 | 5.72 | speech | 127 | 3.84 |
| our government will | 24 | 5.64 | minister | 43 | 4.83 | economic | 105 | 3.18 |
| canada | 23 | 5.41 | national | 37 | 4.15 | harper | 104 | 3.15 |
| canadian | 21 | 4.94 | election | 36 | 4.04 | throne | 101 | 3.05 |
| economic | 19 | 4.47 | economy | 34 | 3.82 | minister | 88 | 2.66 |
| economy | 16 | 3.76 | quebec | 34 | 3.82 | national | 88 | 2.66 |
| country | 14 | 3.29 | ottawa | 33 | 3.70 | economy | 79 | 2.39 |
| global | 13 | 3.06 | speech | 33 | 3.70 | throne speech | 76 | 2.30 |
| world | 12 | 2.82 | economic | 31 | 3.48 | ontario | 75 | 2.27 |
| energy | 11 | 2.59 | federal | 31 | 3.48 | ottawa | 75 | 2.27 |
| financial | 10 | 2.35 | parliament | 28 | 3.14 | spending | 69 | 2.09 |
| jobs | 10 | 2.35 | throne | 26 | 2.92 | federal | 66 | 2.00 |
| provinces | 10 | 2.35 | charest | 24 | 2.69 | auto | 61 | 1.84 |
| security | 10 | 2.35 | campaign | 23 | 2.58 | industry | 61 | 1.84 |
| national | 9 | 2.12 | prime minister | 22 | 2.47 | conservative | 56 | 1.69 |
| parliament | 9 | 2.12 | financial | 19 | 2.13 | regulator | 50 | 1.51 |
| prosperity | 9 | 2.12 | throne speech | 19 | 2.13 | canadian | 49 | 1.48 |
| trade | 9 | 2.12 | conservatives | 18 | 2.02 | flaherty | 49 | 1.48 |
| challenges | 8 | 1.88 | deficit | 18 | 2.02 | securities | 48 | 1.45 |
| international | 8 | 1.88 | finance | 17 | 1.91 | quebec | 47 | 1.42 |
| investment | 8 | 1.88 | meeting | 17 | 1.91 | financial | 46 | 1.39 |
| legislation | 8 | 1.88 | premier | 17 | 1.91 | crisis | 45 | 1.36 |
| people | 8 | 1.88 | premiers | 17 | 1.91 | provinces | 45 | 1.36 |
| programs | 8 | 1.88 | leader | 16 | 1.80 | finance | 43 | 1.30 |

| Table 41: Word Frequency in Harper's Nov. 19, 2008 Throne Speech (Cont'd) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nov. 19, 2008 (n = 4252) | | | Week Before (n = 8,910) | | | Week After (n = 33,066) | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| system | 8 | 1.88 | provincial | 15 | 1.68 | stephen | 42 | 1.27 |
| businesses | 7 | 1.65 | securities | 15 | 1.68 | prime minister | 41 | 1.24 |
| democracy | 7 | 1.65 | trade | 15 | 1.68 | budget | 39 | 1.18 |
| families | 7 | 1.65 | ontario | 14 | 1.57 | election | 38 | 1.15 |
| fiscal | 7 | 1.65 | finance minister | 13 | 1.46 | stephen harper | 38 | 1.15 |
| home | 7 | 1.65 | mps | 13 | 1.46 | parliament | 37 | 1.12 |
| measures | 7 | 1.65 | provinces | 13 | 1.46 | people | 36 | 1.09 |
| need | 7 | 1.65 | regulator | 13 | 1.46 | province | 36 | 1.09 |
| opportunities | 7 | 1.65 | mr harper | 13 | 1.46 | senate | 36 | 1.09 |
| public | 7 | 1.65 | stephen harper | 13 | 1.46 | public | 34 | 1.03 |
| services | 7 | 1.65 | canadians | 12 | 1.35 | sector | 33 | 1.00 |
| spending | 7 | 1.65 | elections | 12 | 1.35 | fiscal | 32 | 0.97 |
| strengthen | 7 | 1.65 | layton | 12 | 1.35 | house | 32 | 0.97 |
| stronger | 7 | 1.65 | canadian | 11 | 1.23 | canadians | 31 | 0.94 |
| will work with | 7 | 1.65 | crisis | 11 | 1.23 | conservatives | 31 | 0.94 |
| | | | flaherty | 11 | 1.23 | global | 31 | 0.94 |
| | | | opposition | 11 | 1.23 | infrastructure | 29 | 0.88 |
| | | | conservative | 10 | 1.12 | leader | 29 | 0.88 |
| | | | spending | 10 | 1.12 | provincial | 28 | 0.85 |
| | | | fiscal | 9 | 1.01 | jobs | 27 | 0.82 |
| | | | prime minister stephen harper | 9 | 1.01 | premier | 27 | 0.82 |
| | | | barriers | 8 | 0.90 | water | 27 | 0.82 |
| | | | democrats | 8 | 0.90 | workers | 27 | 0.82 |
| | | | global | 8 | 0.90 | business | 26 | 0.79 |
| | | | industry | 8 | 0.90 | governments | 26 | 0.79 |
| | | | jim flaherty | 8 | 0.90 | stimulus | 26 | 0.79 |
| | | | jobs | 8 | 0.90 | cost | 25 | 0.76 |
| | | | leaders | 8 | 0.90 | deficit | 25 | 0.76 |
| | | | markets | 8 | 0.90 | campbell | 24 | 0.73 |
| | | | measures | 8 | 0.90 | don | 24 | 0.73 |
| | | | new democrats | 8 | 0.90 | opposition | 24 | 0.73 |

The government was aware of the growing financial uncertainty abroad during this Throne Speech, but the Conservatives instead chose to temper their language to represent what they called a stronger mandate received from Canadians due to their increased seat count of 16 MPs. The U.S. stock market peaked in October 2007, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average exceeded 14,000 points. It then declined, accelerating in October 2008, when it began to affect global markets pronouncedly. The Dow reached a trough of

around 6,600 in March 2009, so at the start of the 40th parliament, Canada was just beginning to understand the potential economic issues ahead.

The opposition parties were not swayed by the government's business as usual tone though, and instead they set the path for the Coalition Government crisis (which is discussed in detail in chapter nine). The media prior to the Throne Speech was already mentioning an impending economic crisis, and in the media afterward we see the first mention of the words "deficit" (25 times) and "stimulus" (26 times), which would come to define the 2008-2011 period. No mention of a Conservative "Economic Action Plan" existed at this time.

The Conservatives would not lose control of the government agenda until the fiscal update on November 27, 2008 (one day after the end of the media sample above), when the PMO's decision to include a provision to scrap political party subsidies roused the opposition parties to unite, stating that the new update was not in the interests of Canadians during an impending financial crisis. Savoie (2010) summarized this period as follows:

> Harper's decision to scrap public subsidies to political parties was extremely ill timed, if not ill informed. He would pay a high political price. His reputation, and by ricochet, his power with his Cabinet and caucus would suffer. Words soon circulated around Ottawa and in the media that the decision to eliminate public financing for political parties was Harper's alone. His Cabinet was not consulted, nor obviously was his caucus. He simply sent, at the last minute, a directive to the minister of finance to include it in his economic update statement, "without ministers or deputy ministers knowing." This, the media argued, demonstrated that he was a "ferociously partisan leader" with a profound desire to centralize "everything in his own hands." (Savoie, 2010, p. 132)

The opposition parties were not mentioned at this time in the media, because Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and Prime Minister Harper were under attack for not doing

enough to assuage Canadians fears of the economic downturn. The Conservative media dominance here was not reflective of a positive occurrence for the PMO's public relations team; instead it foregrounded the Coalition Government crisis as the House awaited the disasterous fiscal update that would trigger the events leading to Harper's call for Parliament's prorogation.

In 2009, Harper's "do-over" 789 word Throne Speech returned the Conservatives to a clear agenda (Maslove, 2009, p. 7). The 2009 Throne Speech focused on "Canada's economic stimulus plan", which would later be re-titled "Canada's Economic Action Plan" in the 2009 budget. Table 42 presents that the short speech focused on the "economy" and "jobs", with the economic "crisis" now firmly established (mentioned 6 times, as opposed to none in the previous speech).

**Table 42: Word Frequency in Harper's Jan. 6, 2009 Throne Speech (40th Parliament)**

| Jan. 6, 2009 (n = 789) | | | Week Before (n = 2,794) | | | Week After (n = 3,224) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| government | 18 | 22.73 | government | 37 | 13.24 | securities | 23 | 7.13 |
| our government | 15 | 18.94 | court | 17 | 6.08 | government | 21 | 6.51 |
| canadians | 9 | 11.36 | power | 11 | 3.94 | regulator | 21 | 6.51 |
| economy | 9 | 11.36 | constitutional | 10 | 3.58 | canada | 19 | 5.89 |
| canada | 6 | 7.58 | law | 9 | 3.22 | financial | 14 | 4.34 |
| crisis | 6 | 7.58 | parliament | 9 | 3.22 | gas | 14 | 4.34 |
| our government is | 6 | 7.58 | coalition | 8 | 2.86 | industry | 14 | 4.34 |
| protect | 6 | 7.58 | canadians | 7 | 2.51 | report | 12 | 3.72 |
| acting | 5 | 6.31 | remedy | 7 | 2.51 | harper | 10 | 3.10 |
| economic | 5 | 6.31 | courts | 6 | 2.15 | market | 10 | 3.10 |
| jobs | 5 | 6.31 | democracy | 6 | 2.15 | pipeline | 10 | 3.10 |
| parliament | 5 | 6.31 | liberal | 6 | 2.15 | oil | 9 | 2.79 |
| plan | 5 | 6.31 | public | 6 | 2.15 | provinces | 9 | 2.79 |
| speech | 5 | 6.31 | supreme court | 6 | 2.15 | senate | 9 | 2.79 |
| action | 4 | 5.05 | acting | 5 | 1.79 | speech | 9 | 2.79 |
| communities | 4 | 5.05 | against | 5 | 1.79 | confidence | 8 | 2.48 |
| our government is acting to | 4 | 5.05 | canada | 5 | 1.79 | conservatives | 8 | 2.48 |
| throne | 4 | 5.05 | canadian | 5 | 1.79 | natural gas | 8 | 2.48 |
| actions | 3 | 3.79 | house | 5 | 1.79 | national securities regulator | 8 | 2.48 |

| Table 42: Word Frequency in Harper's Jan. 6, 2009 Throne Speech (Cont'd)) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jan. 6, 2009 (n = 789) | | | Week Before (n = 2,794) | | | Week After (n = 3,224) | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| face | 3 | 3.79 | opposition | 5 | 1.79 | regulatory | 8 | 2.48 |
| global | 3 | 3.79 | people | 5 | 1.79 | budget | 7 | 2.17 |
| immediate | 3 | 3.79 | society | 5 | 1.79 | provincial | 7 | 2.17 |
| members | 3 | 3.79 | charter | 4 | 1.43 | regulation | 7 | 2.17 |
| our government will | 3 | 3.79 | crisis | 4 | 1.43 | votes | 7 | 2.17 |
| priorities | 3 | 3.79 | democratic | 4 | 1.43 | economy | 6 | 1.86 |
| representatives | 3 | 3.79 | minority | 4 | 1.43 | energy | 6 | 1.86 |
| stimulus | 3 | 3.79 | powers | 4 | 1.43 | flaherty | 6 | 1.86 |
| world | 3 | 3.79 | quebec | 4 | 1.43 | opposition | 6 | 1.86 |
| aboriginal | 2 | 2.53 | bloc | 3 | 1.07 | seats | 6 | 1.86 |
| avoid | 2 | 2.53 | civil society | 3 | 1.07 | aide | 5 | 1.55 |
| build | 2 | 2.53 | declaration that the government | 3 | 1.07 | companies | 5 | 1.55 |
| canadian | 2 | 2.53 | defeat | 3 | 1.07 | confidence votes | 5 | 1.55 |
| commons | 2 | 2.53 | election | 3 | 1.07 | expert panel | 5 | 1.55 |
| credit | 2 | 2.53 | history | 3 | 1.07 | federal | 5 | 1.55 |
| economic stimulus plan | 2 | 2.53 | judges | 3 | 1.07 | liberals | 5 | 1.55 |
| honourable | 2 | 2.53 | judicial | 3 | 1.07 | parliament | 5 | 1.55 |
| imperative | 2 | 2.53 | leader | 3 | 1.07 | project | 5 | 1.55 |
| infrastructure | 2 | 2.53 | minority government | 3 | 1.07 | quebec | 5 | 1.55 |
| invest | 2 | 2.53 | ottawa | 3 | 1.07 | regulators | 5 | 1.55 |
| long term growth | 2 | 2.53 | parliamentary | 3 | 1.07 | review | 5 | 1.55 |
| measures | 2 | 2.53 | prime minister | 3 | 1.07 | rules | 5 | 1.55 |
| members of the house of commons | 2 | 2.53 | professor | 3 | 1.07 | senators | 5 | 1.55 |
| our government is acting to protect | 2 | 2.53 | public opinion | 3 | 1.07 | stock | 5 | 1.55 |
| prime minister stephen harper | 2 | 2.53 | scenarios | 3 | 1.07 | throne | 5 | 1.55 |
| recession | 2 | 2.53 | school | 3 | 1.07 | | | |
| speech from the throne | 2 | 2.53 | section of the charter | 3 | 1.07 | | | |
| throne speech | 2 | 2.53 | stephane dion | 3 | 1.07 | | | |
| uncertainty | 2 | 2.53 | unconstitutional | 3 | 1.07 | | | |
| weakened | 2 | 2.53 | university | 3 | 1.07 | | | |
| | | | violation | 3 | 1.07 | | | |

The brief Throne Speech received little media attention in comparison to its predecessors. The media prior to the speech was focused on the economic crisis, and still discussing the fortunes of Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, who had resigned on October 20, 2008, after

the Liberals' election loss, with his resignation taking full effect on December 10, 2008, when Michael Ignatieff took the reins of the party. The Coalition Government issue had mostly been solved by the Liberals' drop in the polls at this point. The Bloc was the only other opposition party that was receiving attention prior to the Throne Speech in connection to the Coalition Government.

The media after the Throne Speech focused on the economy, and Harper's intention to fill empty Senate seats with Conservatives in case a confidence vote or another Coalition Government attempt stopped the forward momentum of his agenda again when the budget was tabled. The budget (8 mentions) was the main document that would decide the path forward for the Conservatives. The Liberals' fortunes were again discussed in the media after the Throne Speech alongside the Conservatives; no other parties were mentioned frequently.

In 2010, the length 6,085 word Throne Speech updated the government's progress in implementing "Canada's Economic Action Plan" (7 mentions in Table 43). The speech followed after the government returned from its second prorogation when Harper ended parliament, purportedly for an Olympic break, amid accusations of Afghan detainee abuses and stifling parliament's access to budgetary records.

| Table 43: Word Frequency in Harper's Mar. 3, 2010 Throne Speech (40th Parliament) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mar. 3, 2010 (n = 6,085) | | | Week Before (n = 12,301) | | | Week After (n = 60,500) | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| government | 110 | 18.08 | canada | 76 | 6.18 | government | 496 | 8.20 |
| our government will | 63 | 10.35 | government | 75 | 6.10 | canada | 425 | 7.02 |
| canadians | 45 | 7.40 | budget | 69 | 5.61 | speech | 280 | 4.63 |
| canada | 33 | 5.42 | harper | 42 | 3.41 | budget | 203 | 3.36 |
| world | 32 | 5.26 | parliament | 31 | 2.52 | throne | 194 | 3.21 |
| canadian | 28 | 4.60 | plan | 31 | 2.52 | ontario | 189 | 3.12 |
| legislation | 20 | 3.29 | spending | 31 | 2.52 | harper | 149 | 2.46 |
| economic | 17 | 2.79 | conservatives | 30 | 2.44 | throne speech | 146 | 2.41 |
| families | 17 | 2.79 | prime minister | 30 | 2.44 | canadian | 123 | 2.03 |
| economy | 16 | 2.63 | canadians | 29 | 2.36 | countries | 122 | 2.02 |
| ensure | 15 | 2.47 | speech | 28 | 2.28 | spending | 96 | 1.59 |
| government will continue to | 14 | 2.30 | federal | 27 | 2.19 | federal | 95 | 1.57 |
| national | 14 | 2.30 | throne | 26 | 2.11 | economic | 94 | 1.55 |
| action | 12 | 1.97 | election | 23 | 1.87 | economy | 93 | 1.54 |
| protect | 12 | 1.97 | deficit | 20 | 1.63 | ottawa | 91 | 1.50 |
| our government will continue to | 11 | 1.81 | ottawa | 20 | 1.63 | mcguinty | 89 | 1.47 |
| communities | 10 | 1.64 | work | 20 | 1.63 | canadians | 85 | 1.40 |
| global | 10 | 1.64 | canadian | 19 | 1.54 | conservative | 85 | 1.40 |
| industry | 10 | 1.64 | liberal | 19 | 1.54 | women | 80 | 1.32 |
| parliament | 10 | 1.64 | ontario | 19 | 1.54 | energy | 77 | 1.27 |
| security | 10 | 1.64 | economic | 18 | 1.46 | industry | 75 | 1.24 |
| system | 10 | 1.64 | opposition | 18 | 1.46 | prime | 73 | 1.21 |
| action plan | 9 | 1.48 | pension | 18 | 1.46 | public | 71 | 1.17 |
| build | 9 | 1.48 | public | 18 | 1.46 | health | 69 | 1.14 |
| energy | 9 | 1.48 | throne speech | 18 | 1.46 | anthem | 68 | 1.12 |
| growth | 9 | 1.48 | leader | 17 | 1.38 | liberals | 68 | 1.12 |
| jobs | 9 | 1.48 | finance | 16 | 1.30 | parliament | 68 | 1.12 |
| strengthen | 9 | 1.48 | liberals | 16 | 1.30 | plan | 68 | 1.12 |
| trade | 9 | 1.48 | stimulus | 15 | 1.22 | deficit | 65 | 1.07 |
| care | 8 | 1.31 | conservative | 14 | 1.14 | country | 64 | 1.06 |
| crime | 8 | 1.31 | ignatieff | 14 | 1.14 | conservatives | 63 | 1.04 |
| economic action plan | 8 | 1.31 | measures | 14 | 1.14 | water | 63 | 1.04 |
| people | 8 | 1.31 | recession | 14 | 1.14 | investment | 62 | 1.02 |
| strategy | 8 | 1.31 | security | 14 | 1.14 | jobs | 62 | 1.02 |
| aboriginal | 7 | 1.15 | agenda | 13 | 1.06 | business | 57 | 0.94 |
| businesses | 7 | 1.15 | prorogation | 13 | 1.06 | province | 57 | 0.94 |
| canada's economic action plan | 7 | 1.15 | retirement | 13 | 1.06 | change | 56 | 0.93 |
| children | 7 | 1.15 | stephen harper | 13 | 1.06 | people | 55 | 0.91 |
| job | 7 | 1.15 | tax | 13 | 1.06 | care | 52 | 0.86 |
| justice | 7 | 1.15 | income | 12 | 0.98 | stephen | 49 | 0.81 |

| Table 43: Word Frequency in Harper's Mar. 3, 2010 Throne Speech (40th Parliament) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mar. 3, 2010 (n = 6,085)** | | | **Week Before (n = 12,301)** | | | **Week After (n = 60,500)** | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| recession | 7 | 1.15 | mcguinty | 12 | 0.98 | ownership | 48 | 0.79 |
| safety | 7 | 1.15 | strategy | 12 | 0.98 | research | 48 | 0.79 |
| values | 7 | 1.15 | care | 11 | 0.89 | help | 45 | 0.74 |
| veterans | 7 | 1.15 | economy | 11 | 0.89 | liberal | 45 | 0.74 |
| war | 7 | 1.15 | flaherty | 11 | 0.89 | tax | 45 | 0.74 |
| access | 6 | 0.99 | plans | 11 | 0.89 | policy | 44 | 0.73 |
| federal | 6 | 0.99 | afghanistan | 10 | 0.81 | world | 44 | 0.73 |
| financial | 6 | 0.99 | financial | 10 | 0.81 | finance | 43 | 0.71 |
| government will take steps to | 6 | 0.99 | fiscal | 10 | 0.81 | need | 43 | 0.71 |
| health | 6 | 0.99 | health | 10 | 0.81 | premier | 42 | 0.69 |
| investment | 6 | 0.99 | mps | 10 | 0.81 | power | 41 | 0.68 |
| life | 6 | 0.99 | pensions | 10 | 0.81 | newspapers | 40 | 0.66 |
| live | 6 | 0.99 | people | 10 | 0.81 | telecom | 40 | 0.66 |
| market | 6 | 0.99 | policy | 10 | 0.81 | corporate | 39 | 0.64 |
| measures | 6 | 0.99 | private | 10 | 0.81 | plans | 39 | 0.64 |
| priority | 6 | 0.99 | problem | 10 | 0.81 | agenda | 38 | 0.63 |
| recognition | 6 | 0.99 | provincial | 10 | 0.81 | education | 38 | 0.63 |
| recognizing | 6 | 0.99 | senate | 10 | 0.81 | leader | 38 | 0.63 |
| spending | 6 | 0.99 | | | | market | 38 | 0.63 |
| united | 6 | 0.99 | | | | clean | 36 | 0.60 |
| victims | 6 | 0.99 | | | | recession | 36 | 0.60 |
| will introduce legislation to | 6 | 0.99 | | | | stimulus | 36 | 0.60 |
| women | 6 | 0.99 | | | | | | |

Overall, the Throne Speech read like a government preparing for an election against the new Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff. The media before and after the speech focused on the developing battle between Harper and Ignatieff over the rising government deficit and how best to direct the economic stimulus going forward.

In the analysis above, the Throne Speeches can at best be viewed as diluted versions of the party's platform in terms of their agenda-setting function when interpreted solely from an "issue units" perspective. They were notably not as useful as the platforms as an agenda-setting document that put forwards new ideas, as Cairns argued (2007; 2008). The Throne Speeches are more of an institutionalized and ritualized symbolic text at this point in history, designed to reinterpret the government's election platform

priorities into a bureaucratic statement outlining the work ahead. In particular, Martin's sole Throne Speech was weak in terms of forwarding any key issues in a repetitive or meaningful way, as it was assessed above using the issue unit analysis method. This outcome reflected his acquiescence to cautiously explore the minority situation, instead of forwarding a bold vision of the next parliament, which was especially demonstrated as he later partnered with the NDP during 2005 simply to maintain power.

In contrast, Harper's 2006-2008 Throne Speeches were stronger in that they communicated the Conservatives' agendas clearly. Harper's five priorities were salient among the speeches and in the media. The same could not be said for Harper's 2008 speech, but the Conservatives did recover their communication dominance by the 2009-2011 period when they focused on implementing their Economic Action Plan.

In terms of the issue units method, the political communication genre of the Throne Speeches was useful for assessing the stability of the start of parliament, but a better context for understanding the implementation of the government's agenda is provided in the analysis of the prime minister's official addresses below.

## II. Prime Minister Speeches 2004-2011

> If you want to be a government in a minority Parliament, you have to work with other people.
>
> - Newly elected Opposition Leader Stephen Harper in 2004 (Harper, 2004)

Harper's early comments about minority governments being about working with the opposition were directed at the Martin Liberals in 2004, but they would hold little meaning during his 2006-2011 terms, as the following analysis of prime ministerial addresses demonstrates in terms of his consistent forwarding of the Conservative agenda.

Like the Throne Speeches, there is little scholarship on prime ministerial

speeches. Seudfeld, Bluck, Ballard & Baker-Brown (1990) studied popular media and the speeches of federal party leaders appearing two months before the ten Canadian federal election from 1945-1974, inclusive of speeches from King's to Trudeau's governments, to understand the patterns of motive imagery (need for achievement, power, and party affiliation descriptions) and integrative complexity in the speeches (i.e. the range of issues the speeches covered). They found that the media contained significantly higher patterns of representing the party affiliations and power imagery, and were significantly lower in the category of achievement than leaders' speeches. The media and winners used more descriptions of motive richness, as compared to losers' speeches. As well, Liberal candidates used more affiliation imagery and demonstrated higher integrative complexity than the Conservatives. Their study was innovative in attempting to understand trends of how language was used to represent leadership over time, but missed interpreting minority government situations, and cultural or regional dimensions in their analysis.

Conley (2009) argued that the frequency of prime minister's speeches were a good indicator of success for a government's output, but it is difficult to assess from his regression formula whether his calculations were based on word frequency or the number of speeches alone. He also did not give any nuanced analysis of the content of the speeches to confirm if more speeches reflected the engagement of the prime minister with the electorate, or if audience size mattered for the speeches to have an effect, or if changes in technology affected how the speeches were received.

For comparison's sake, Kumar's *Managing the President's Message* (2007) is a detailed study of the White House communications under George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. It is difficult to compare the Canadian prime minister's speech output to the

President's because of the different modes of political communication that each office uses. For instance, Presidential "Addresses to the Nation" occur more often than the Westminster Throne Speech, and they might better be compared to the inaugural presidential speech or the State of the Union addresses. Presidents definitely make more "addresses and remarks" than Canadian prime ministers; Clinton had a low of 410 in 1993 and high of 645 in 2000, while Bush had a low of 331 in 2003 and a high of 485 in 2002 (Kumar, 2007, p. 11 and 12), as compared to Martin's high of 32 speeches in 2004 and Harper's 85 in 2007 (see Tables 44 and 25 below). Those presidential figures do not include other press conferences or media events.

No Canadian equivalent exists to Kumar book, where she had access to the White House communication's office for two terms, though it would definitely be a worthwhile study if such access into the PMO was granted to an individual to quantify and describe each Prime Minister's press appearances, press releases, and speeches. Radwanski perhaps offered one of the best summaries of the PMO's output under Trudeau:

> In an average month, he works about 250 hours. Roughly 90 of them, or 36 percent of his working time, are spent on government business, including Cabinet and its committees, the House of Commons, the governor general and other government officials, foreign visitors and ambassadors, outside groups, and foreign travel. Political activities involving ministers, MPs, senators, or Liberal Party officials account for 50 hours, or 20 percent of his time. He spends 12.5 hours, or 5 percent, in press conferences or other forms of contact with the news media; 30 hours, or 12 percent, with the staff in the PMO and PCO; and 67.2 hours, or 27 percent of his time, on paperwork, correspondence, and telephone calls. On a typical day, his activities as prime minister have spanned 11 hours. (Radwanski, 1978, p. 114)

Savoie (2010) updated this account stating that prime ministers read about 300 plus pages of briefing materials and correspondence each week, and when he was shown a typical weekly agenda for Chrétien, "There was not an empty spot anywhere on it" (Savoie,

2010, p. 143).

The following analysis of prime ministerial output quantifies the descriptive data and top issues in the speeches of Paul Martin and Stephen Harper. The prime ministers' official speeches were taken directly from Martin and Harper's official government websites for the same 2004-2011 period. The speeches were all archived, and then categorized by date, location, type (i.e. regional, national, or international), topic focus (i.e. Aboriginals, Agriculture, Child Care, Crime, Culture, Economy, Education, Environment, Government, Health Care, Infrastructure, International Relations, Memorials, Military, Municipalities, Trade, etc.), and the number of words in each speech. This information will better help us to understand how active each minority prime minister was in terms of interacting with the Canadian public in their official capacities to direct their respective agendas. Tables 44 and 45 identify the total number of speeches and amount of words spoken by Martin and Harper during each of their sessions.[21]

[21] **Parliamentary Session Summary Information**
*Martin - 38th Parliament:* October 4, 2004 – November 29, 2005.
*Harper - 39th Parliament:* April 3, 2006 – September 7, 2008.
1st Session - April 3, 2006 – Sept 14, 2007; 2nd Session - Oct 16, 2007 – Sept 7, 2008.
*Harper - 40th Parliament:* November 18, 2008 – March 26, 2011.
1st Session - November 18, 2008 – December 4, 2008; 2nd Session - January 26, 2009 – December 30, 2009; 3rd Session - March 3, 2010 – March 26, 2011.

**Table 44: Prime Minister Martin Speeches by Month 2004-2005**

| | 2004 | | 2005 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Month** | **Speeches** | **Words** | **Speeches** | **Words** |
| January | 2 | 3266 | 2 | 3643 |
| February | 1 | 4753 | 2 | 3722 |
| March | 7 | 11647 | 1 | 508 |
| April | 4 | 12927 | 0 | 0 |
| May | 2 | 6375 | 5 | 8236 |
| June | 1 | 486 | 3 | 6699 |
| July | 3 | 7606 | 1 | 729 |
| August | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| September | 2 | 5958 | 3 | 9250 |
| October | 2 | 5620 | 2 | 3853 |
| November | 5 | 6930 | 2 | 3787 |
| December | 3 | 6060 | 1 | 1659 |
| **TOTALS** | **32** | **71628** | **22** | **42086** |

Of note, Martin took August off in both years from 2004-2005, whereas Harper's output only experienced lulls around the starting and ending of parliamentary sessions.

**Table 45: Prime Minister Harper Speeches by Month 2004-2005**

| | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Month** | **Speeches** | **Word** | **Speeches** | **Word** | **Speeches** | **Word** | **Speeches** | **Word** | **Speeches** | **Word** | **Speeches** | **Word** |
| Jan. | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2384 | 1 | 893 | 2 | 970 | 5 | 6452 | 2 | 2246 |
| Feb. | 2 | 1350 | 11 | 9154 | 3 | 4103 | 8 | 3861 | 1 | 2054 | 8 | 6758 |
| Mar | 3 | 3899 | 8 | 9272 | 7 | 9196 | 10 | 10298 | 5 | 7114 | 5 | 5499 |
| Apr | 15 | 21648 | 8 | 7714 | 4 | 7480 | 5 | 4955 | 5 | 5388 | | |
| May | 10 | 14433 | 6 | 6375 | 9 | 9724 | 7 | 6048 | 6 | 5340 | | |
| June | 8 | 11357 | 8 | 8885 | 7 | 7510 | 7 | 7358 | 3 | 3464 | | |
| July | 2 | 3185 | 9 | 8671 | 4 | 2154 | 2 | 1120 | 2 | 1639 | | |
| Aug. | 3 | 4964 | 6 | 3798 | 7 | 6255 | 9 | 6074 | 4 | 4067 | | |
| Sept. | 6 | 7952 | 4 | 6940 | 1 | 823 | 9 | 9346 | 4 | 4725 | | |
| Oct. | 11 | 13565 | 7 | 9114 | 2 | 1456 | 10 | 7239 | 7 | 7412 | | |
| Nov. | 7 | 5114 | 8 | 9403 | 2 | 6279 | 8 | 6825 | 3 | 3205 | | |
| Dec. | 3 | 1802 | 5 | 5081 | 5 | 3074 | 3 | 5166 | 3 | 2694 | | |
| **TOT** | **70** | **89269** | **85** | **86791** | **52** | **58947** | **80** | **69260** | **48** | **53554** | **15** | **14503** |

**NOTE:** Parliamentary sessions are colour coded.
Blue shade = 1st session || Green shade = 2nd session || Red shade = 3rd session

Martin's single session 38th Parliament (October 4, 2004 – November 29, 2005) included 54 speeches in total, whereas Harper's first session from April 3, 2006 – Sept 14, 2007 included 135 (shaded in blue above in Table 45). Consequently, Harper also spoke more

than Martin in his first session at 152,462 words, compared to Martin's 113,714 words (see Table 46 below).

**Table 46: Total Speeches and Words for the 38th to 40th Parliaments (Martin and Harper)**

| Parliament / Session | 38th Parliament | 39th Parliament (1st Session) | 39th Parliament (2nd Session) | 40th Parliament (1st Session) | 40th Parliament (2nd Session) | 40th Parliament (3rd Session) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Martin** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** |
| **Regional Focus** | 4 (8,215) | 26 (22,844) | 21 (17,026) | 0 | 37 (26,535) | 27 (27,252) |
| **National Focus** | 21 (56,541) | 69 (79,889) | 31 (39,238) | 3 (5,608) | 25 (21,597) | 22 (24,163) |
| **International Focus** | 29 (48,958) | 38 (47,482) | 13 (18,349) | 2 (2,613) | 21 (23,158) | 14 (16,642) |
| **Session Total** | 54 (113,714) | 135 (152, 462) | 63 (71,736) | 9 (10,809) | 80 (69,260) | 63 (68,057) |
| **Parliament Total** | **54 (113,714)** | **198 (224,198)** | | **152 (148,126)** | | |

**Notes:** The table cells above are formatted to represent the number of speeches (and total words).

Tables 47 and 48 illustrate the annual speech and word output for the 2004-2011 period. The notable spikes in both charts reflect two key limiting factors for the frequency of the prime minister's addresses: (i) the importance of taking time to explain and sell the budget to Canadians, and (ii) the seasonal parliamentary schedule. In terms of the first limiting factor, the release of the budget affects the prime minister's available time to promote it appropriately. The budget release dates are represented in the two figures below using red lines for the Liberals' and dark blue lines for the Conservatives' budgets.

**Table 47: Prime Minister Speeches by Month 2004-2011**

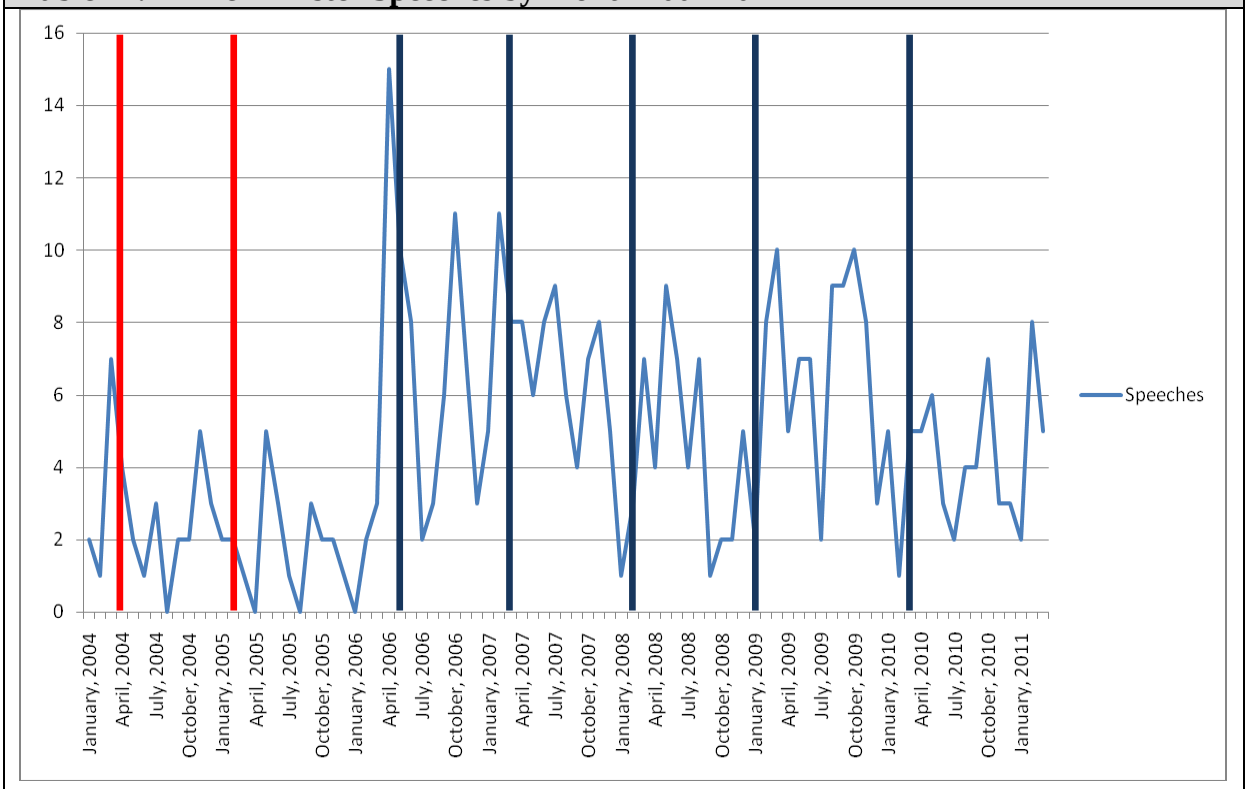
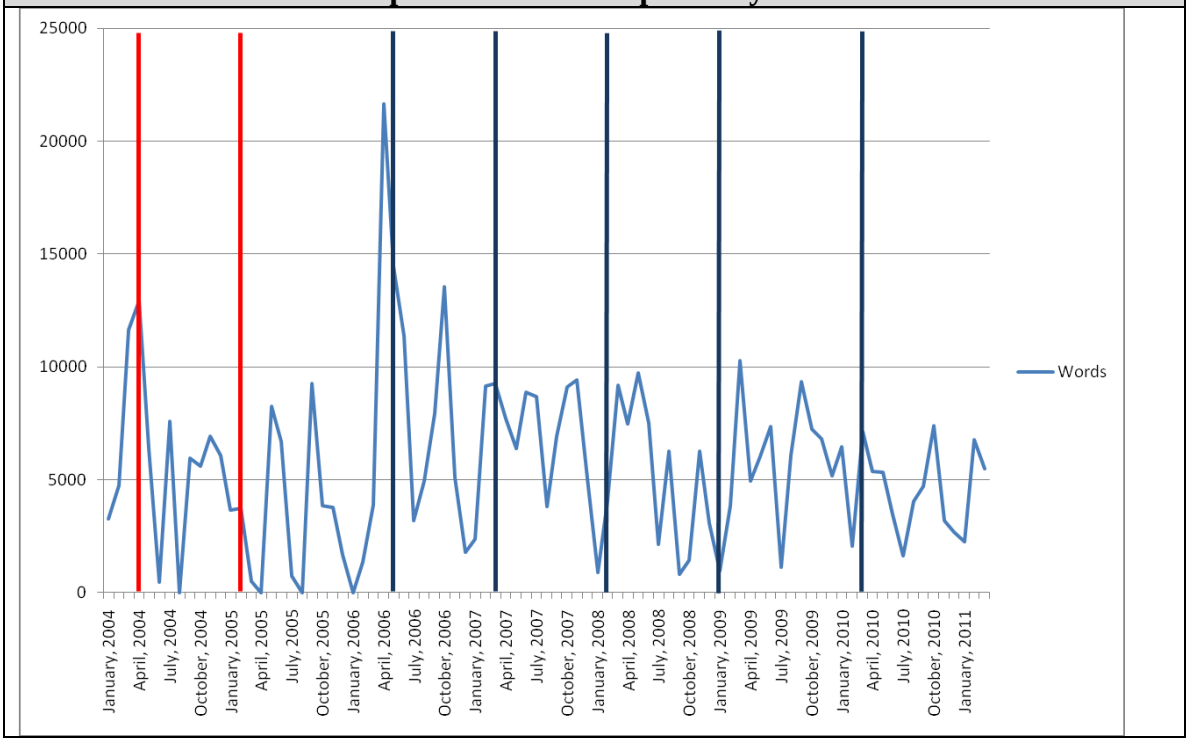



**Table 48: Prime Minister Speeches - Words Spoken by Month 2004-2011**



The budget speech dates and titles are listed in Table 49 below by individual Finance Minister to help document its impact on the prime minister's speech frequency. The two largest budget speech spikes came right at the start of both Martin and Harper's terms, afterwards the budget speeches still demonstrated increases in the prime minister's speeches, with the exception of taking holiday time off in January or during elections.

**Table 49: The Federal Government Budget Speeches 2004-2011**

| Finance Minister | Date | Title | Page Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ralph Goodale | April 1, 2004 | New Agenda for Achievement | 17 |
| Ralph Goodale | February 23, 2005 | Delivering on Commitments | 22 |
| Jim Flaherty | May 2, 2006 | Focusing on Priorities | 23 |
| Jim Flaherty | March 19, 2007 | Aspire to a Stronger, Safer, Better Canada | 22 |
| Jim Flaherty | February 26, 2008 | Responsible Leadership | 17 |
| Jim Flaherty | January 27, 2009 | Canada's Economic Action Plan | 24 |
| Jim Flaherty | March 4, 2010 | Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth | 19 |

The evidence for the second limiting factor of the seasonality of the address is demonstrated in winter and summer output of prime ministerial speeches. In this sense, the speeches are still limited by the parliamentary calendar and the prime minister's commitments in Ottawa, despite the fact the speeches can now be viewed online and having been transformed in their capacity to reach Canadians via the Internet medium. The news cycle for attentive viewers is, therefore, used according to when the most Canadians are linked into the media streams, namely the Fall and Winter months outside of the December holiday break.

Overall, Harper's 2006-2007 period was visibly the peak of output for the entire seven-year period. Beyond vacations, the troughs for both Martin and Harper can best be explained by the on-going battles in minority government described previously when they were needed in the House. The two limiting factors demonstrate that to set their

agenda the prime minister must make the most use of their parliamentary calendar, avoiding the seasonal breaks, and preparing accordingly for the budget launch to promote the agenda as it is translated into action through the outlays, to let Canadians know how, when, and where their tax dollars are being spent.

Table 50 provides a list of the top locations where Martin and Harper delivered their addresses from 2004-2011. Only two of Martin's 54 speeches were given outside of a major Canadian or international city (in Gagetown, New Brunswick, and another in Gatineau, Quebec, specifically).

**Table 50: Total Speeches and Words for the 38th to 40th Parliaments (Top Locations)**

| **Parliament (Session)** | **38th Parliament** | **39th Parliament (1st Session)** | **39th Parliament (2nd Session)** | **40th Parliament (1st Session)** | **40th Parliament (2nd Session)** | **40th Parliament (3rd Session)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Martin** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** |
| **1** | Ottawa 16 (28,549) | Ottawa 58 (58,610) | Ottawa 23 (25,439) | Ottawa 4 (6504) | Ottawa 12 (8,518) | Ottawa 16 (16,950) |
| **2** | Montreal 6 (13,398) | Toronto 9 (8,491) | Toronto 4 (4,480) | Peru 1 (1,717) | Toronto 11 (9,760) | Toronto 5 (5,477) |
| **3** | New York 4 (5,744) | Vancouver 7 (8,895) | Halifax, Vancouver 2 (each) | | Calgary, Victoria 3 (each) | Vancouver 4 (3,527) |
| **4** | Toronto 3 (10,884) | Montreal 5 (8,895) | | | | Mississauga, St. John's 3 (each) |
| **5** | St. John's 2 (5,315) | Calgary, Mississauga, New York, Winnipeg 2 (each) | | | | |

**Notes:** The table cells above are formatted to represent the number of speeches (and total words in parentheses).

In contrast to Martin, Harper spoke more during his first 2006 session in regional areas, with a special focus on Quebec where he delivered eight speeches at various locations (two in Quebec City, and one each in Adstock, Kuujjuaq, Laval, Lery, Levi, and Sherbrooke), clearly attempting to build on the 10 seats they gained in the last election. Beyond that focus, Harper also focused on Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario when

speaking regionally in his second 2006 session and in the latter two sessions in the 2008-2011 period during the relative periods of stability in each minority government, targeting strategic ridings to continue building Conservative support.

Table 51 lists the top agenda issue area focused on in each speech. A double-blind review process selected these agenda areas where two researchers assessed each speech with one category; disagreements were judged together by the two researchers. Although speeches often reflect across agenda areas, the single selection feature was simply used to give a broad overview of each prime ministers areas of focus in their addresses.

| Table 51: Top Agenda Topics by Speech for the 38th to 40th Parliaments | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Parliament (Session)** | **38th Parliament** | **39th Parliament (1st Session)** | **39th Parliament (2nd Session)** | **40th Parliament (1st Session)** | **40th Parliament (2nd Session)** | **40th Parliament (3rd Session)** |
| **Prime Minister** | **Martin** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** | **Harper** |
| **1** | Economy 14 (35,959) | Military 17 (13,941) | Economy 10 (20,304) | Government 2 (5,122) | Infrastructure 18 (11,421) | Culture 13 (11,994) |
| **2** | International Relations 14 (26,002) | Culture 17 (14,306) | Culture 8 (5,140) | Culture 2 (1,382) | Economy 9 (11,646) | Infrastructure 8 (7,653) |
| **3** | Memorials/ Tributes 4 (2,478) | International Relations 16 (23,605) | Infrastructure 6 (5,275) | Economy 1 (1,717) | International Relations 7 (10,670) | Sport 5 (5,336) |
| **4** | Culture 3 (2,592) | Environment 10 (10,719) | International Relations 5 (5,076) | | Culture 7 (4,602) | Military 4 (3,639) |
| **5** | | Memorials/ Tributes 9 (6,986) | Military 5 (5,186) | | Sport 7 (3,995) | Economy, Education, Industry, International Relations, Memorials 3 (each) |
| **6** | | Health Care 8 (6,628) | Aboriginals 4 (5,360) | | Military 6 (4,591) | |
| **7** | | Crime 7 (8,829) | Health Care 4 (2,654) | | Memorials/ Tributes 6 (4,354) | |
| **8** | | Infrastructure 6 (6,812) | Crime, Industry, Memorials 3 (each) | | Labour 4 (2,504) | |
| **9** | | Trade 4 (3,539) | | | Industry, Trade, Tourism 3 (each) | |
| **10** | | Economy 4 (8,475) | | | | |
| **11** | | Agriculture, Municipalities, Sports 3 (each) | | | | |
| **Notes:** The table cells above are formatted to represent the number of speeches (and total words in parentheses). | | | | | | |

Harper notably covered more issue areas than Martin in his speeches from 2006-2007; however, the 2008 session led to a notably lull in terms of the range of issues he addressed.

Tables 52 to 54 document the top agenda issue units in each collective speech sample for the 38th to 40th Parliaments. The only real surprises given the review of the overall agenda battles described in the analysis of the Throne Speeches were again in the subtle shifts in language used to set the agenda. For example, Martin's speeches collectively used the language of "the government" and "Canada", whereas Harper's used "our government" and "our country" to be more inclusive. As well, Harper's speeches noticeably used more explicit courtesies like "thank you" and "ladies and gentlemen".

| **Table 52: Issue Frequency in Prime Minister Martin's Speeches (38th Parliament)** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1st Session: October 4, 2004 – November 29, 2005** | **n = 113,714 words** | |
| **Issue Units** | **Frequency** | **Relative Frequency** |
| canada | 724 | 6.05 |
| government | 422 | 3.53 |
| world | 402 | 3.36 |
| canadians | 336 | 2.81 |
| people | 279 | 2.33 |
| health | 267 | 2.23 |
| minister | 238 | 1.99 |
| countries | 227 | 1.90 |
| country | 223 | 1.86 |
| international | 217 | 1.81 |
| prime | 214 | 1.79 |
| prime minister | 209 | 1.75 |
| nations | 199 | 1.66 |
| canadian | 177 | 1.48 |
| united | 173 | 1.45 |
| national | 169 | 1.41 |
| security | 160 | 1.34 |
| economic | 158 | 1.32 |
| together | 158 | 1.32 |
| global | 147 | 1.23 |
| nation | 138 | 1.15 |
| development | 137 | 1.15 |
| martin | 135 | 1.13 |
| north | 133 | 1.11 |
| paul | 132 | 1.10 |
| paul martin | 131 | 1.10 |
| public | 128 | 1.07 |
| aboriginal | 123 | 1.03 |
| states | 122 | 1.02 |
| rights | 114 | 0.95 |
| china | 112 | 0.94 |
| communities | 112 | 0.94 |
| economy | 104 | 0.87 |
| health care | 102 | 0.85 |

| Table 52: Issue Frequency in Prime Minister Martin's Speeches (Cont'd) | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Session: October 4, 2004 – November 29, 2005 | n = 113,714 words | |
| **Issue Units** | **Frequency** | **Relative Frequency** |
| community | 100 | 0.84 |
| leaders | 99 | 0.83 |
| human | 98 | 0.82 |
| life | 98 | 0.82 |
| home | 96 | 0.80 |
| right | 95 | 0.79 |
| trade | 95 | 0.79 |
| institutions | 93 | 0.78 |
| cities | 89 | 0.74 |
| federal | 83 | 0.69 |
| president | 83 | 0.69 |
| quebec | 80 | 0.67 |
| education | 77 | 0.64 |
| provinces | 77 | 0.64 |
| united nations | 77 | 0.64 |

Table 52 presents a now familiar pattern in terms of Martin's issue units that were represented in his platform and Throne Speeches. "Cities", "communities", the "economy", "health care", and "provinces" are all well represented as they were in his other information objects.

In contrast, Harper's speeches focused again on his frames to attract middle class families. The term "families" is not recorded in the top Martin mentions, but Harper's first session contained 156 mentions of the word and 76 uses in his second session. The frame was used less frequently in his first 2008 session, and then disappeared by the second session as the Conservatives turned to deal with the economic downturn.

| Table 53: Issue Frequency in Prime Minister Harper's Speeches (39th Parliament) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1st Session: April 3, 2006 – Sept 14, 2007 n = 152, 462 | | | 2nd Session: Oct 16, 2007 – Sept 7, 2008 n = 71,736 | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Relative Frequency** | **Issue Units** | **Frequency** | **Relative Frequency** |
| canada | 1121 | 7.28 | canada | 607 | 8.01 |
| government | 793 | 5.15 | government | 365 | 4.82 |
| canadians | 622 | 4.04 | canadian | 246 | 3.25 |
| canadian | 545 | 3.54 | country | 214 | 2.82 |
| country | 499 | 3.24 | canadians | 212 | 2.80 |
| world | 376 | 2.44 | world | 194 | 2.56 |
| people | 351 | 2.28 | thank you | 183 | 2.41 |
| minister | 329 | 2.14 | minister | 180 | 2.37 |
| thank you | 293 | 1.90 | our government | 178 | 2.35 |
| federal | 229 | 1.49 | first | 171 | 2.26 |
| prime | 222 | 1.44 | people | 158 | 2.08 |
| national | 221 | 1.43 | economic | 140 | 1.85 |
| prime minister | 215 | 1.40 | tax | 126 | 1.66 |
| afghanistan | 185 | 1.20 | economy | 122 | 1.61 |
| ottawa | 180 | 1.17 | future | 122 | 1.61 |
| gentlemen | 176 | 1.14 | national | 120 | 1.58 |
| tax | 175 | 1.14 | ladies | 102 | 1.35 |
| ladies | 174 | 1.13 | gentlemen | 101 | 1.33 |
| public | 173 | 1.12 | ladies and gentlemen | 101 | 1.33 |
| ladies and gentlemen | 172 | 1.12 | prime | 97 | 1.28 |
| change | 157 | 1.02 | north | 92 | 1.21 |
| families | 156 | 1.01 | prime minister | 91 | 1.20 |
| crime | 155 | 1.01 | plan | 85 | 1.12 |
| parliament | 155 | 1.01 | communities | 84 | 1.11 |
| united | 151 | 0.98 | development | 83 | 1.10 |
| economic | 149 | 0.97 | arctic | 81 | 1.07 |
| communities | 147 | 0.95 | strong | 81 | 1.07 |
| energy | 147 | 0.95 | budget | 80 | 1.06 |
| security | 147 | 0.95 | families | 76 | 1.00 |
| international | 142 | 0.92 | aboriginal | 74 | 0.98 |
| media | 142 | 0.92 | community | 73 | 0.96 |
| plan | 142 | 0.92 | federal | 73 | 0.96 |
| children | 141 | 0.92 | international | 72 | 0.95 |
| values | 140 | 0.91 | our country | 70 | 0.92 |
| women | 130 | 0.84 | global | 64 | 0.84 |
| budget | 129 | 0.84 | parliament | 63 | 0.83 |
| air | 128 | 0.83 | crime | 62 | 0.82 |
| countries | 128 | 0.83 | ottawa | 62 | 0.82 |
| economy | 128 | 0.83 | history | 61 | 0.80 |
| future | 127 | 0.82 | taxes | 60 | 0.79 |
| quebec | 127 | 0.82 | children | 59 | 0.78 |
| new government | 126 | 0.82 | debt | 58 | 0.77 |

| Table 54: Issue Frequency in Prime Minister Harper's Speeches (40th Parliament) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1st Session: Nov. 18, 2008 – Dec. 4, 2008** n = 10,809 | | | **2nd Session: Jan. 26, 2009 – Dec. 30, 2009** n = 69,260 | | | **3rd Session: Mar. 3, 2010 – Mar. 26, 2011** n = 68,057 | | |
| **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** | **Issue Units** | **Freq.** | **Rel. Freq.** |
| canada | 120 | 10.91 | canada | 663 | 9.36 | canada | 432 | 6.29 |
| government | 55 | 5.00 | economic | 299 | 4.22 | government | 216 | 3.14 |
| world | 49 | 4.45 | government | 293 | 4.13 | canadian | 212 | 3.09 |
| economic | 42 | 3.82 | country | 285 | 4.02 | country | 206 | 3.00 |
| canadian | 33 | 3.00 | canadian | 252 | 3.56 | world | 197 | 2.87 |
| our government | 32 | 2.91 | world | 241 | 3.40 | people | 194 | 2.82 |
| canadians | 31 | 2.82 | canadians | 220 | 3.10 | canadians | 182 | 2.65 |
| new | 31 | 2.82 | minister | 178 | 2.51 | economic | 171 | 2.49 |
| country | 30 | 2.73 | thank you | 174 | 2.46 | new | 167 | 2.43 |
| financial | 29 | 2.64 | global | 169 | 2.38 | thank you | 155 | 2.26 |
| global | 27 | 2.45 | recession | 159 | 2.24 | gentlemen | 142 | 2.07 |
| economy | 25 | 2.27 | ladies and gentlemen | 158 | 2.23 | ladies and gentlemen | 137 | 1.99 |
| countries | 23 | 2.09 | new | 156 | 2.20 | ladies | 137 | 1.99 |
| families | 23 | 2.09 | people | 143 | 2.02 | minister | 116 | 1.69 |
| christmas | 19 | 1.73 | infrastructure | 110 | 1.55 | global | 112 | 1.63 |
| crisis | 19 | 1.73 | global recession | 104 | 1.47 | economy | 96 | 1.40 |
| thank you | 19 | 1.73 | jobs | 104 | 1.47 | our government | 89 | 1.30 |
| fiscal | 18 | 1.64 | economy | 103 | 1.45 | jobs | 79 | 1.15 |
| trade | 18 | 1.64 | action plan | 95 | 1.34 | national | 72 | 1.05 |
| actions | 17 | 1.55 | projects | 95 | 1.34 | games | 69 | 1.00 |
| together | 17 | 1.55 | development | 92 | 1.30 | countries | 66 | 0.96 |
| rights | 16 | 1.45 | trade | 85 | 1.20 | support | 66 | 0.96 |
| communities | 15 | 1.36 | countries | 84 | 1.19 | our country | 65 | 0.95 |
| human | 15 | 1.36 | premier | 82 | 1.16 | projects | 62 | 0.90 |
| national | 15 | 1.36 | economic action plan | 81 | 1.14 | ontario | 59 | 0.86 |
| people | 15 | 1.36 | history | 77 | 1.09 | development | 58 | 0.84 |
| governments | 14 | 1.27 | ontario | 75 | 1.06 | recession | 58 | 0.84 |
| policy | 14 | 1.27 | communities | 73 | 1.03 | coast | 55 | 0.80 |
| summit | 14 | 1.27 | national | 73 | 1.03 | service | 55 | 0.80 |
| history | 13 | 1.18 | greetings | 72 | 1.02 | best | 54 | 0.79 |
| international | 13 | 1.18 | together | 68 | 0.96 | british | 54 | 0.79 |
| markets | 13 | 1.18 | international | 67 | 0.95 | history | 54 | 0.79 |
| francophonie | 12 | 1.09 | opportunities | 64 | 0.90 | community | 53 | 0.77 |
| development | 11 | 1.00 | prime minister | 63 | 0.89 | action plan | 50 | 0.73 |
| energy | 11 | 1.00 | community | 61 | 0.86 | infrastructure | 50 | 0.73 |
| federal | 11 | 1.00 | north | 60 | 0.85 | public | 49 | 0.71 |
| free | 11 | 1.00 | best | 59 | 0.83 | friends | 47 | 0.68 |
| parliament | 11 | 1.00 | announcement | 56 | 0.79 | trade | 47 | 0.68 |
| security | 11 | 1.00 | business | 56 | 0.79 | economic action plan | 46 | 0.67 |
| family | 10 | 0.91 | tax | 56 | 0.79 | | | |
| human rights | 10 | 0.91 | crisis | 53 | 0.75 | | | |

The 2008-2011 data sample also verified that the PMO was still focused mainly on framing the economic downturn in 2008 using issue units like the "global economy" (8 mentions), "fiscal stimulus" (8), and "monetary policy" (7), rather than any mention of a "recession", which did not appear until 2009. Similarly, there is no mention of the "economic action plan" until 2008's second session.

An interesting use of a repeating phrase appeared in Harper's second session during the 40th Parliament in 2009, where he used the phrase "As the world struggles with the effects of the global recession we as Canadians are looking ahead. We are using our strong balance sheets to aggressively fund…" (used in four speeches in 2009). Again, in 2010, he used the following phrase four times: "Canadians should be very proud of the fact that during the worst global recession in half a century our country has significantly outperformed its peers among major advanced economies" (used in four speeches in 2010). Both examples reveal the tendencies of the Harper machine to frame the Conservative government's successes as a shared victory for Canadians, while also displaying some recycling by the PMO's speechwriters.

Overall, tables 52 to 53 demonstrate that the government agenda narrative from the platforms appeared far more readily in the cumulative addresses as compared to the Throne Speeches. From 2004-2005, Martin's focuses on aboriginals, cities, health care, and education all appeared, as did Harper's five priorities in 2006 and the economic action plan in 2009.

The prime ministers speeches served the purpose of a live, in-person update of the government's progress and their framing of key policies to inform the electorate of the government's mandate. The messages could be simultaneously narrowcast to specific

local and regional audiences, and broadcast live nationally via different media, then kept online for later viewing via text or video format, which are definite changes from the times when Prime Minister Laurier could command audiences of thousands of people to hear him speak in person. It is difficult to measure the impact of how people interpret the speeches today without knowing the number of audience members and media viewers for each speech, but two means could be to analyze media mentions after each speech, and polls before and after key speeches. Those are metrics for future analyses and projects though.

**III. Prime Ministers' Actions: Government Bills and Outlays**

> The expenditure budget process is vitally important simply because it acts as the government's nervous system. It sends out signals to every department and agency and to all public servants about what is important to the government. The merits of new programs and new initiatives can be fully debated in public forum, in government departments, and even in cabinet, but they can never be pursued unless funds are made available. (Savoie, 1991, p. 3)

For many, Savoie's *The Politics of Public Spending in Canada* (1991) started off the conversation in policy literature of the importance of understanding how the federal government's agenda was translated into its budgets and outlays, which led to his later work on *Court Government* (2008) and *Power* (2010). To update the politics of public spending during the 2004-2011 minority government, the thirty year old *How Ottawa Spends* edited book series provides numerous vital resources and helpful articles discussing the government budgets during the 2004-2011 period, describing in detail the difficulty of understanding and measuring the agenda-setting process from a budgeting and expenditures perspective (e.g. Doern 2004; 2005; 2006; 2009; Hale, 2006). Each

edition includes critical interpretations of the agenda process (e.g. Baier, Bakvis & Brown, 2005; Rounce, 2006), along with the government's factual budget information (which can also be found on the Public Works and Government Services website: http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/).

In "Martin in Power: From Coronation to Contest" (2004), Doern described Martin's early foray to set up the 2004 election when bringing forth its budget. The budget speech reflected the last Liberal majority's Throne Speech's priorities of:

- Democratic reform
- Ethics
- Strengthening our social foundations
- Building a twenty-first-century economy
- Ensuring Canada's place in the world
- Securing Canada's place in the world
- Securing Canada's public health and safety
- Financial accountability (Doern, 2004, p. 8)

These priorities were also reflected in Martin's new Cabinet committee structure that was announced prior to the election, and the themes would be built right into the Liberal platform.

Finance Minister Ralph Goodale's pre-election budget promised the following expenditures to present the new Martin Liberal party plan that was centred on fiscal responsibility and reshaping executive federalism:

- $7 billion over ten years for cities (and communities) through a rebate of the GST
- $4 billion over ten years for the clean-up of contaminated sites
- $1 billion to assist farmers and cattle producers hit by the BSE crisis

- $665 million over two years for public health, including the new public health agency
- $605 million over five years for intelligence, border protection, marine and cyber-security, threat assessment, and emergency response
- $270 million for venture capital for start-up technology companies
- $250 million for DND missions in Afghanistan
- $248 million for international assistance
- Canada learning Bond initiative to provide up to $2,000 for children born after 2003 in lower-income families; and a grant of up to $3,000 for first-year postsecondary-dependent students from such families
- Accelerated spending of infrastructure funds on cities and towns, including $350 million for Toronto transit (Doern, 2004, p. 13)

During the ensuing 2004 election, $5 billion was also announced for a national day care program, and despite having credited $9 billion surplus to pay for their promises (or "buy" voters, as the opposition framed it), the Liberals had to shift their priorities when they returned to the House with a minority government.

After the 2004 election, the realities of minority government shifted Martin's priorities, despite his attempt at going it alone without partnering immediately with the NDP in the House. His first budget on February 23, 2005, followed the Throne Speech in listing priorities that attempted to project a broad vision for Canada five years into the future, many of them recast from the last Liberal budget to appease the Bloc and NDP:

- new spending of $42 billion over five years
- $11 billion cut from existing spending through the work of the new Cabinet Committee on Expenditure Review to be reallocated from lower to higher priorities over the next five years
- real economic growth forecast at 2.9 percent in 2005 and 3.1 percent in 2006 (based on average private sector consensus forecasts)

- based on the Health Plan, federal cash transfers to the provinces and territories will increase from $16.3 billion this year to $19.6 billion next year, thereafter escalating by 6 percent annually, reaching $30.5 billion in 2013-2014
- balanced budgets projected through to 2009-2010
- $12.8 billion increase in defence spending over five years
- an annual $3 billion contingency service reserve, to be applied to debt reduction if not needed to meet current budgetary commitments
- $5 billion over 5 years to introduce an Early Learning and Child Care initiative, $100 million of which will be for First Nations on reserves
- share of $5 billion in federal gas tax revenues will go to cities and communities over 5 years rising to $2 billion in 2009-2010 and continuing thereafter indefinitely
- a tax cut achieved through raising the tax exemption level on incomes to $10,000 by 20009 (currently $8,150)
- a lowering of the corporate tax to 19 percent from 21 percent by 2010
- $4 billion over five years to meet Canada's Kyoto Protocol commitments plus $1 billion for a Clean Fund
- An acceleration of capital cost allowances for firms investing in efficient and renewable energy generation equipment
- $1.6 billion for heritage, the arts and sports (Doern, 2005, pp. 9-10)

The budget was expected to grow from $141.4 billion in expenses or 2003-2004 to $194.5 billion in 2009-2010. After the budget, the Kyoto plan's costing was released at $10 billion, and despite the increased expenses, the Conservatives decided to support the budget to let it pass without incident and take the wind out of Martin's big announcements, only to criticize the costs later.

On April 26, the NDP made a deal with the Liberals to include $4.6 billion extra on spending including, "$1.6 billion for affordable housing; $1.5 billion for the reduction of post-secondary tuition fees; $900 million for environmental initiatives; $500 million

for foreign aid; and $100 million for a pension protection fund" (Doern, 2005, p. 11). The deal was meant to buy the support of the NDP, and it only lasted a few months until November 28, 2005, when the House fell on a motion of non-confidence in reaction to the second Gomery report. Savoie summed up the Martin agenda as follows: "Paul Martin's tenure as prime minister was short-lived, and few would describe it as successful. He sought to reshape many policies, from health care and foreign policy to Aboriginal development, but in the end he was able to influence very little" (Savoie, 2010, p. 143).

In 2006, the Conservatives' five priorities were considered in light of the larger promise to preserve social programs "and to increase overall spending by $30 billion over five years" aimed at attracting middle class voters that they had gained at the Liberals' expense in the election (Doern, 2006, p. 8). The budget included spending on:

- maintaining the currently projected growth rates for transfers to persons through elderly benefits and Employment Insurance, and transfers to other levels of government for health, social programs, equalization, and municipal infrastructure
- providing all families a new $1200 per year Choice in Childcare Allowance for each child under six, to be taxable for the spouse with the lower income
- increase spending on Canadian Defence Forces by $5.3 billion over five years beyond the currently projected levels of defence spending
- $2 billion over five years to Highways and Border Infrastructure
- limiting federal spending by departments (except for Defence and Indian Affairs) to the rate of inflation and population growth
- a $5 million increase for university research
- a $425 million increase in foreign aid (Doern, 2006, p. 9)

Along with the budget, the Accountability Act was to be the Conservatives' major piece of legislation to contrast with the Liberals' Sponsorship Scandal. Behiels (2010) and

Flanagan (2009) described how the budget was designed to destroy the Liberal party with the help of the NDP through their attacks on the Liberals' entitled position of power (Behiels, 2010, p. 19). Flanagan (2009) used the analogy of the Punic Wars, and Behiels explained this as follows:

> In the First Punic War, the 2004 election, the CPs objective was to reduce the Liberals to a minority by making significant gains in Ontario. In the Second Punic War – the election would come within two years – the CP would win, at the very least, a minority government. A Harper CP government would then prepare itself for a Third Punic War, in which the CP would win a majority government. In doings so, a CP government would reduce the Liberal Party to a rump of 20 percent of the electorate – one with reduced financial resources, unstable leadership, and fighting with the NDP for control over the left-of-center portion of the political spectrum (Behiels, 2010, p. 18)

In 2006, the Conservatives were able to maintain support in the House by spending on NDP social programs when it served their interests, and by targeting the Liberals' on their past spending failures while they were going through a change in leadership. For the 2007 Budget, Flanagan noted how important the balancing act of using other parties was in terms of:

> getting the BQ to support his budget and softwood lumber agreement with the United States; the BQ and the NDP to support the Accountability Act (the Liberals supported it in the House but delayed it in the Senate); one faction of the Liberals to support extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan; and all three opposition parties to support his motion "That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada." (2009, p. 275)

These strategies allowed the 2006-2008 agenda to pass for the most part, with exceptions to their crime and gun legislation promises that were stalled or held up in committees prior to the government falling on a non-confidence motion that the Conservatives had been attempting to trigger because of the Dion Liberals' low polling numbers. The election was purportedly called because of parliament's dysfunction.

The 2006 Conservatives governed with the smallest minority ever in the Canadian House of Commons (just 40.6% of the seats). The 39th Parliament also became Canada's longest Conservative minority on October 24, 2006, but how much of their mandate did they achieve as compared to Martin?

A number of scholars have noted that Canada is behind in terms of creating and using standard metrics for assessing the success of the budget and expenditure process in terms of policy effectiveness (Conley, 2009, p. 4; Thomas, 2007). Others state that the task is difficult with the best of data to assess comparable methods (Whittaker, 2003). In 2007, Thomas took the approach of comparing the number of bills that successfully reached completion in a government, and divided them by the number of sitting days to understand if modern minority government was slowing down the legislative process.

Table 55 portrays the number of bills that were reported to the House, standardized to 150 sitting days, and calculated to assess Chrétien and Martin's output in terms of legislation.

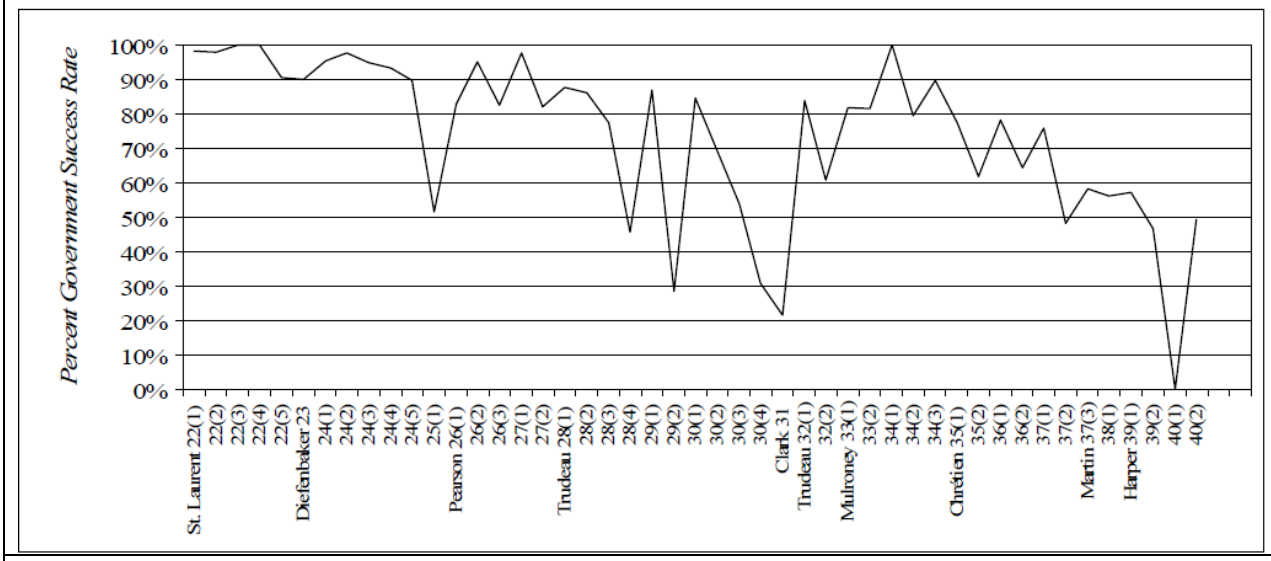
**Table 55: Comparison of Government Bills Reported to the House of Commons During the Sessions of the 36th, 37th and 38th Parliaments, Standardized to a Session of 150 Sitting Days**

| | 36.1 | 36.2 | 37.1 | 37.2 | 37.3 | 38 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bills referred after 2nd reading** | | | | | | |
| Reported with amendment(s) | 21 | 15 | 18 | 15 | 8 | 12 |
| Not amended | 14 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 3 | 15 |
| **Bills referred before 2nd reading** | | | | | | |
| Reported with amendment(s) | 2 | – | 1 | 1 | – | 10 |
| Not amended | 1 | – | 0 | 2 | 8 | 2 |
| **Total bills reported** | 37 | 25 | 32 | 26 | 19 | 39 |
| **Total % reported with amendment(s)** | 59% | 60% | 59% | 61% | 45% | 56% |

Table 55 demonstrates that each of the last few Liberal parliaments had sent roughly 55-60 percent of its bills for royal assent, with the exception of the last majority session in 2004. Martin's first minority term experienced only a slight drop from the Chrétien era.

In 2009, Conley completed a similar study going back to Louis St. Laurent to document government output in terms of legislation. Table 56 identifies the bills passed compared to the total introduced. Conley's findings are not similar to that of Thomas's in that his numbers for Chrétien and Martin's achievements were comparably higher.

**Table 56: Bills Passed and Bills Per Day/Session, by Prime Minister & Parliament/Session**




**Source:** (Conley, 2009, p. 34)

Conley's work also revealed that in terms of legislative output Harper's parliaments were indeed dysfunctional, averaging 24 bills per session, while Martin's average 46 (Conley, 2009, p. 14). Pearson's minority also appeared as one of the most successful in history, leading Conley to claim that "it has taken much longer to build consensus for bills in ways that were not true for Pearson in the 1960s" (Conley, 2009, p. 14). Neither Thomas nor Conley's work included assessments of whether a bill was affected by the opposition in minority government, if larger pieces of legislation took more time, or what the overall impact of policies were once implemented.

The legislative output of the minority governments can be represented simply by dividing the number of bills introduced by the number of bills passed (see Table 57).

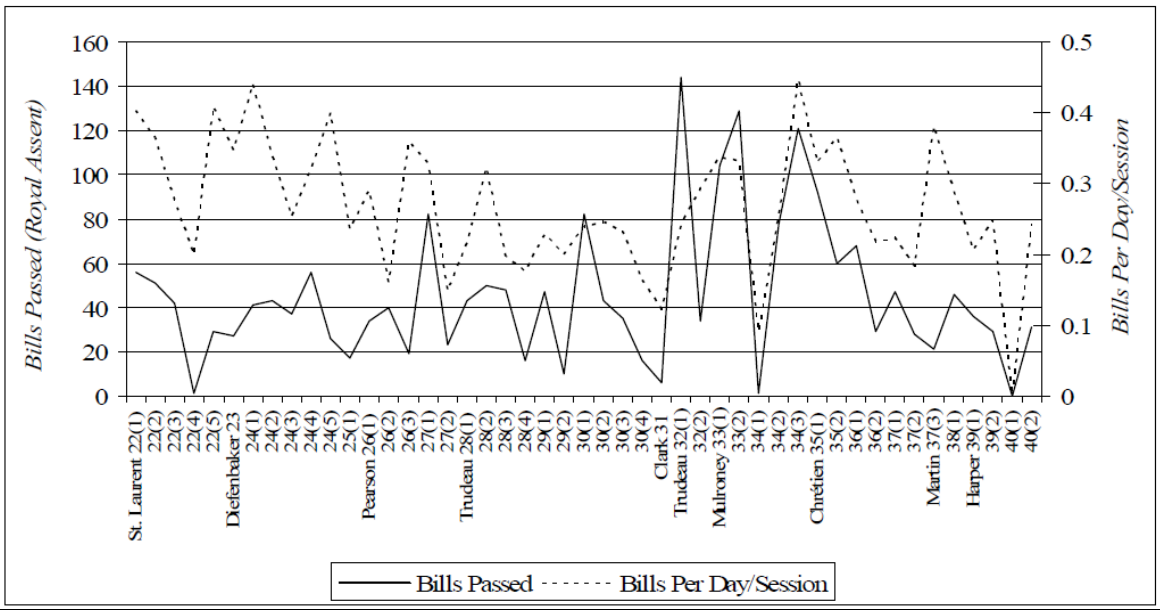
| Table 57: Legislative Output of Minority Governments Since Confederation | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prime Minister** | **Parliament** | **Bills Introduced (by session)** | **Bills Passed (by session)** | **Proportion (%)** | **Average (%)** |
| Diefenbaker | *23rd Parliament*: Oct.14, 1957 to Feb. 6, 1958 | 30 | 27 | 90.0 | 90.0 |
| Pearson | *27th Parliament*: Jan. 18, 1966 to Apr. 23, 1968 | 1st – 84<br>2nd – 28 | 82<br>23 | 97.6<br>82.1 | 89.9 |
| Pearson | *26th Parliament*: May 16, 1963 to Sept. 8, 1965 | 1st – 41<br>2nd – 42<br>3rd – 23 | 34<br>40<br>19 | 82.9<br>95.2<br>82.6 | 86.9 |
| King | *14th Parliament*: Mar. 8, 1922 to Sept. 5, 1925 | 1st – 56<br>2nd – 80<br>3rd – 92<br>4th – 63 | 52<br>68<br>72<br>53 | 92.9<br>85.0<br>78.3<br>84.1 | 85.1 |
| King | *15th Parliament*: Jan. 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926 | 26 | 16 | 61.5 | 61.5 |
| Trudeau | *29th Parliament*: Jan. 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974 | 1st – 54<br>2nd – 35 | 47<br>10 | 87.0<br>28.6 | 57.8 |
| Martin | *38th Parliament*: Oct. 4, 2004 to Nov. 29, 2005 | 82 | 46 | 56.1 | 56.1 |
| Harper | *39th Parliament:* Apr. 3, 2006 to Sept. 7, 2008 | 1st – 63<br>2nd – 62 | 36<br>29 | 57.1<br>46.8 | 52.0 |
| Diefenbaker | *25th Parliament*: Sept. 27, 1962 to Feb. 6, 1963 | 33 | 17 | 51.5 | 51.5 |
| Harper | *40th Parliament*: November 18, 2008 to March 26, 2011 | 1st – 63<br>2nd – 61<br>3rd – 0 | 31<br>28<br>0 | 49.2<br>45.9<br>0 | 31.7 |
| Clark | *31st Parliament*: Oct. 9, 1979 to Dec. 14, 1979 | 28 | 6 | 21.4 | 21.4 |
| Meighen | *15th Parliament* (Cont'd): June 29, 1926 to July 2, 1926 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Source:** Parliament of Canada (2011). Table of Legislation Introduced and Passed by Session. Retrieved from http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/compilations/HouseOfCommons/BillSummary.aspx?Language=E | | | | | |

Table 57 reproduces the results taken directly from the House of Commons website. From this simple summary, it is clear that the legislative output of Martin and Harper during the Internet age has not been helped substantially by having a larger PMO by

comparison with past minority governments. The committee stalling tactics, prorogation, and use of omnibus bills has slowed down Parliament, as others have noted.

Conley's work also used a complex regression analysis of a number of factors to assess the government's success; these factors included: "seat ratios in the Commons, cabinet size, agenda size, length of session, and prime ministerial activity" (Conley, 2009, p. 4). Table 58 presents the findings of his analysis that led him to conclude contemporary minority government was dysfunctional.

**Table 58: Government Success Rates by Prime Minister & Parliament/Session**




**Source:** (Conley, 2009, p. 34)
**Data Source:** Parliament of Canada. (2011). Table of Legislation Introduced and Passed by Session. Retrieved from http://www2.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/compilations/HouseOfCommons/BillSummary.aspx

Table 58 demonstrates that Harper's minority government has accomplished the least of any minority in history according to his metrics. However, as Beheils (2010) and Flanagan (2007) noted the antagonist House and battles could have been by design to construct a majority government.

Martin may not have accomplished much of what he said he would initially in the

2004-2006 minority government, but Conley's formula misses the fact that much of Martin's agenda was also cancelled when Harper came to power. Harper may not have accomplished much in the 2008-2011 session because of the two prorogations that such it down twice, but the Harper 2006-2008 minority did accomplish quite a bit of what its communications led Canadians to believe it would accomplish; this again may not be reflected in the outcomes of Conley's works. In other words, more work needs to be conducted in terms of aligning metrics with framing language strategies.

Interestingly, Conley's conclusions run counter to the hypothesis proposed at the start of this dissertation, in that a centralized PMO allows the government's agenda to more readily pass through the House during minority government. The evidence supports that statement for majority governments, but it does not in the Harper government period, unless we compare Harpers' 2006-2008 accomplishments with Martin's 2004-2006 period. Further, Harper's 2008-2010 period accomplished very little because of the two prorogued sessions that bought the Conservatives enough time to prepare for the next election, building their fortunes on the Economic Action Plan, to construct a majority government in 2011. So, the lack of "success" could again be disputed.

If the 107 person PMO with an overall budget of $9.89 million is needed during minority government, then it does not seem to be translating into legislative action, especially when the prime minister's message is dominantly spread across multiple information objects, as was the case for Harper's 2006-2011 minority period. Using Conley's study alone, the best the evidence would support is the finding that a centralized PMO during the Internet era allows a government to frame and control its messages consistently in the hope of turning a minority government into a majority government,

and it can help to aright the steering of the ship if it goes off course as it did in 2008. Why Canadians would support the continued funding of a larger PMO during a majority government is questionable though, especially during times when the government is considering cuts to trim the deficit. After all, why would the staff be needed if the Cabinet and PCO are at the government's disposal and there are few barriers to turn agendas into policy in the House?

Minority parliament may not have worked in terms of passing legislation, as Conley's work demonstrated, but it could be working in terms of holding the government to account and checking the messages of the government as Russell's work (2008) suggested it would, thereby providing for more democratic input from the representative parties elected to the House. More research would be required to demonstrate from a rhetorical perspective how the opposition parties influenced individual bills, though some of those influences can be found in the budget outlays.

For example, in terms of the Conservatives' 2008-2011 period, Maslove (2009) argued that the Conservatives first fiscal update failed on two points in 2008:

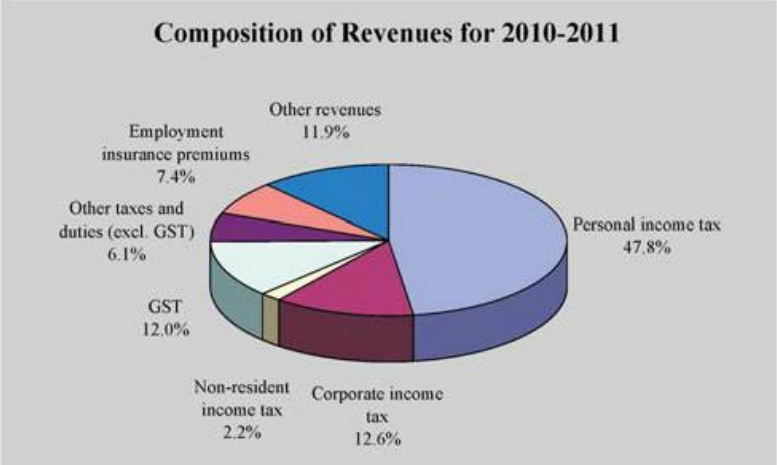
> First, it painted an unrealistic picture of the economic situation and of the fiscal position of the government. On the latter point it projected balanced budgets (actually surpluses of $100 million) for the next two fiscal years (2009-10 and 2010-11) with recovering surpluses thereafter to 2013-14. Secondly, the statement introduced the government's plan to eliminate political party subsidies, to suspend collective bargaining and strike rights of public servants, and revise pay policies while proposing essentially nothing to directly address the economic recession. (Maslove, 2009, p. 6)

Maslove noted that the opposition parties aimed to force a vote of non-confidence and forward a Coalition Government because the government's projections were at odds with every private sector analysis of the economy, and also because of the Conservatives' attacks on their party's subsidies. These oversights in the Conservatives' messaging

concerning the severity of the coming recession were reflected in the analysis of the speeches above. Maslove argued that by the January 2007 budget the Conservative estimates had changed by $16 billion, and "it is difficult to believe that the underlying economic projections changed sufficiently to generate a fiscal difference of this magnitude" (Maslove, 2009, p. 7).

To document this agenda shift, Maslove's work contains the most recent revenue and expenditure records for the government. Figures 14 and 15 have been pulled directly from the Public Accounts Reports for 2010 to have the most recent information.

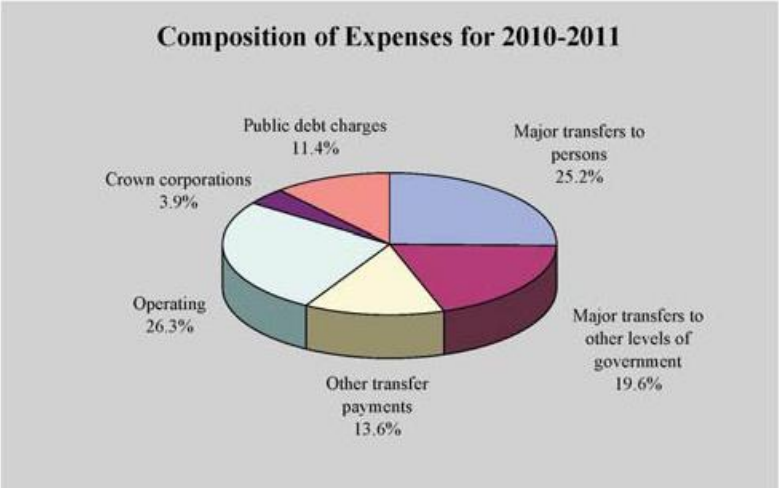
**Figure 14: Composition of Revenues for 2010-2011**




**Source:** Public Accounts. 2010. Compositions of Revenues (p. 6). Retrieved from http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/pdf/49-eng.pdf

The report noted that the revenue ratio to expenditures was at a low point from the 1990s high of what the government was bringing in terms of taxes, the result of the Conservatives' tax credits and cuts affecting the government's coffers.

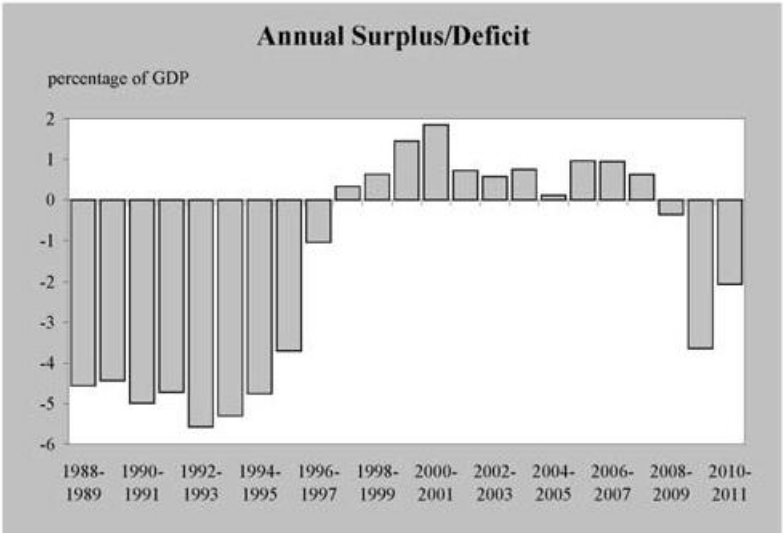
**Figure 15: Composition of Expenses for 2010-2011**




**Source:** Public Accounts. 2010. Compositions of Expenses (p. 7). Retrieved from http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/pdf/49-eng.pdf

Maslove described how the 2009-2011 period became about monitoring the projected $30 billion stimulus spending in the Economic Action Plan, against this backdrop of the government's fiscal accounts. Table 59 below visualizes the projected Harper government deficits.

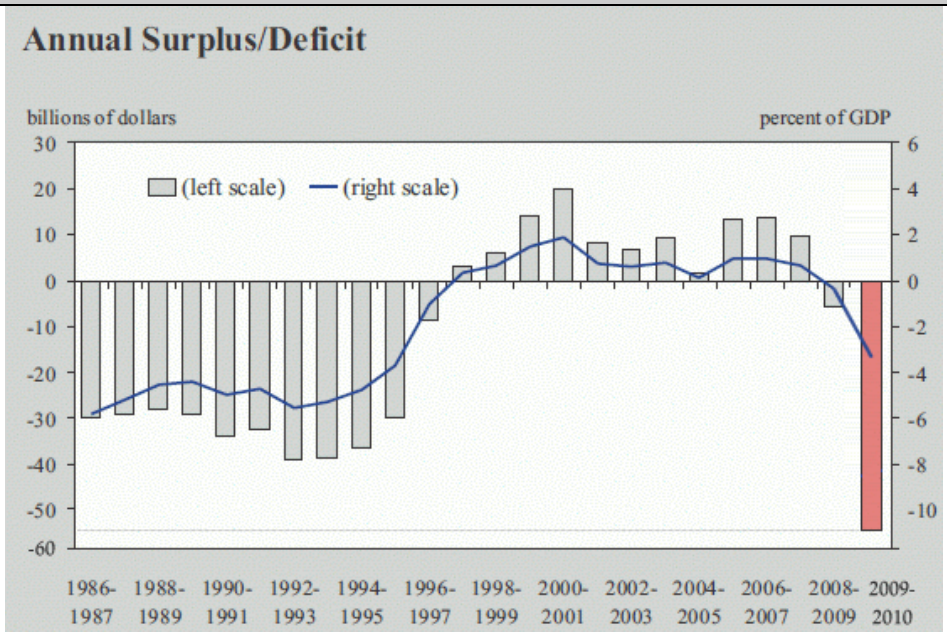
**Table 59: Annual Surplus / Deficit 1988-2011 (Public Accounts)**




**Source:** Public Accounts. 2010. Compositions of Expenses (p. 7). Retrieved from http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/pdf/49-eng.pdf

Table 59 above was taken from the government accounts websites; however, a savvy blogger recently posted the traditional government economists' format of presenting deficits, used by Public Accounts until 2010 (see Table 60 below), arguing that the Conservatives had instructed the public service to hide the true extent of the amount using the subtle shift.

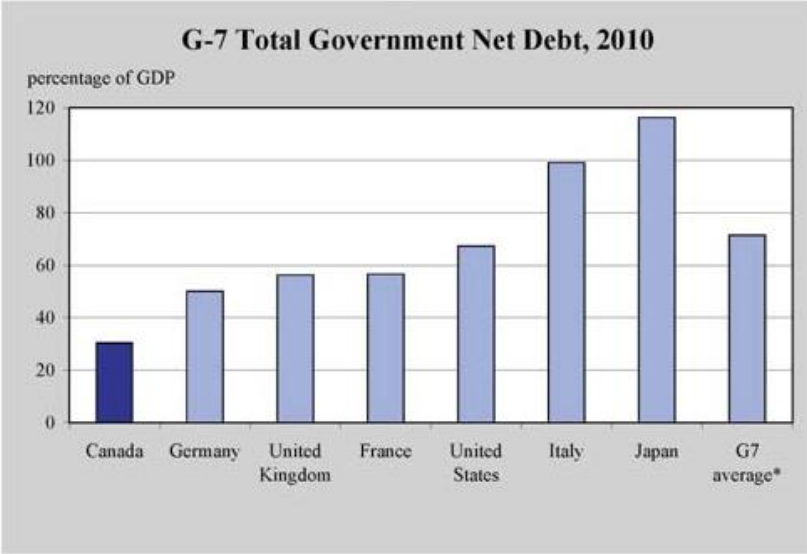
**Table 60: Annual Surplus / Deficit 1988-2011**




**Source:** The Bolt (Blog). Annual Surplus/Deficit. Retrieved from http://blogs.usask.ca/the_bolt/archive/2011/01/canadas_federal_deficit_deceit.html

The Public Accounts also present the view that Canada has the least amount of net debt among the G7 countries (see Table 61), but this feat could not be considered as Harper's doing alone given the Martin Finance Minister years of surpluses and debt repayment.

**Table 61: G-7 Total Government Net Debt, 2010**




**Source:** Public Accounts. 2010. Compositions of Expenses (p. 13). Retrieved from http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/pdf/49-eng.pdf

The review of the government budget outlays demonstrates that while power had increased in the PMO to communicate messages, it did not necessarily translate into power over the public purse or the ability to push legislation through the House without opposition support. The centralization of power went too far in early 2008, and some have argued that it was rising again by the end of 2011, with the Conservatives eyeing cuts to key public service sectors that would reduce the quality of Stats Canada's census data, the monitoring of environment, in favour of shifting money to the Conservatives "Tough on Crime" agenda, increasing jobs for correctional services, and strengthening border security (see Table 62 below).

**Table 62: The Planned Conservative Cuts in 2010**

| BIGGEST CUTS | Cuts in staff | Per cent change |
|---|---|---|
| National Defence | -4,697 | -4.9% |
| Human Resources and Skills Development Cda. | -3,870 | -16.4% |
| Environment Canada | -1,211 | -21% |
| Royal Canadian Mounted Police | -1,106 | -3.8% |
| Statistics Canada | -725 | -13.5% |
| Indian and Northern Affairs Canada | -619 | -13.5% |
| Canadian Heritage | -579 | -33.4% |
| Natural Resources Canada | -416 | -10% |
| National Research Council Canada | -300 | -8.9% |
| Transport Canada | -157 | -3% |
| **MOST GROWTH** | **Growth in staff** | |
| Correctional Service Canada | 5,474 | 24.8% |
| Canada Revenue Agency | 1,793 | 4.3% |
| Citizenship and Immigration Canada | 619 | 13.4% |
| Department of Justice Canada | 394 | 7.5% |
| Industry Canada | 354 | 6.3% |
| Canada Border Services Agency | 327 | 2.3% |
| Public Health Agency of Canada | 139 | 5.1% |
| Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada | 117 | 10.2% |
| Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada | 115 | 1.9% |
| Office of the Chief Electoral Officer | 102 | 21.2% |

**Source:** *The Globe and Mail.* (2011). Conservative Deficit Plan. Retrieved from http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/conservatives-deficit-plan/article2059411/page3/

Like Savoie (Savoie, 2010, p. 132), Maslove did not address whether or not the PMO's "party subsidies" attack was simply an ill-timed manoeuvre, or if it actually helped Harper to create a later stimulus package in 2009 that ended up making room for some Conservative austerity features in Canada's Economic Action Plan, by moving the rhetoric so far to the right that the measures were viewed as less controversial. The majority of Harper's government job cutbacks did not arise until the 2010 period, but the cuts were still an extension of the earlier plan to be rid of the budget deficit within five years.

It is difficult to tell how future public service cuts will affect the Conservatives' electoral support. Overall, the 2008-20011 Conservatives' political agenda was intimately tied to the problem stream of the economic recession. Their future fortunes will similarly depend on whether or not their stewardship through the economic recession pleases the

Canadian electorate as their performance is measured and assessed going forward.

**Conclusion**

Each communication object analyzed above represents a lever of power in the PMO's toolkit, which also included the party platforms and electoral websites. As was identified in studying the platforms and websites, each object in the toolkit is limited by its symbolic, cultural, and institutional history. The Throne Speeches and prime ministerial addresses can now similarly be assessed in terms of Martin and Harper's respective (i) *Executive Styles*, (ii) their abilities in *Framing the Agenda*, (iii) the limitations of *Institutional Factors* on framing, and (iv) their novel uses as *Media Technologies* to set the agenda.

The Throne Speeches, for example, turned out to be watered-down versions of the government's platform in terms of the dominant issue units recorded therein. The most surprising findings were the additions found in Harper's short 2009 Throne Speech, which reflected the government's shift after the Coalition Government crisis. During minority government, there were few other instances where the rhetoric of the Throne Speech offered much more than a resonating echo chamber for the platform promises. Despite the ceremonial speech allowing the government to routinely establish their agenda, an event that was once revered as a longstanding symbol of parliamentary democracy, it has since become a closed professionalized theatre for promoting a general outline of the government's plans to the bureaucracy and politicos (Cairns, 2007; 2008). The Throne Speeches as a genre of communication, therefore, hold inherent institutional limitations for agenda setting in terms of the types of messages they contain and how

they represent the new government.

The best use for communicating a government's agenda during a minority was exemplified during the Harper 2006-2008 period, which contrasted sharply with Martin's government. In 2004, Martin's Throne Speech had few clear agenda details that were transferred from the Liberal platform during the minority parliament situation. Martin was taking his first tentative actions as a minority parliament leader, but he offered little in terms of steering the government when heading into his first session. The lack of clarity was apparent in the media as well, where the opposition party leaders and their issue units were represented frequently intermingled with the Liberals'.

Tables 38 to 43 demonstrated this pattern clearly, first with the Liberals forwarding a wider array of issues units in 2004, which were not carried in the media, with the media instead presenting mentions of some of the opposition leaders before (e.g. Layton and the NDP) and after (e.g. Harper and Duceppe) the speech. The pattern was repeated in the media coverage of Harper's troubled 2008 Throne Speech as well, where the opposition party names and issues again crept up on the issue ticker in mentions.

From 2006-2008, Harper's two Throne Speeches both demonstrated that the Conservatives' five key priorities from their election platform were communicated clearly over the term and in the media as well. Their five key priorities of "accountability", "child care tax credits", "cutting the GST", "patient wait time guarantees", and "tough on crime" appeared in each informational object. The latter 2008 Throne Speech also forwarded new Conservative issues like Canada's security and arctic sovereignty. The consistency with the government's official outputs demonstrated that the language and the agenda were aligned during this period. In other words, the Harper

government's five priorities successfully set the agenda.

However, in 2008, Harper's first Throne Speech was unfocused as the Conservatives struggled with the new minority parliament situation during the early days of the global economic downturn. The terms "crisis" and "recession" did not appear until the second Throne Speech of the 40th parliament, when the Conservatives took to touting "Canada's Economic Action Plan" as the solution to the global economic crisis through fiscal stimulation measures, infrastructure spending, and deficits. The opposition parties had already chastened the Conservatives, binding them into making scheduled fiscal updates during this period, but it did not stop the Conservatives' issue units from leading in media mentions concerning their Throne Speeches after 2008's Coalition Government crisis. In this way, the Conservatives were able to use the levers of power to right their course after stumbling early after the 2008 election.

The analyses of the prime minister's official addresses also offered a number of differences between Martin and Harper's executive styles. From 2006-2007, Harper spoke more words and gave more addresses than Martin in his first parliament. Harper's output exceeded Martin's, demonstrating a conviction that the PM had to set priorities—more than that, he had to embody them. This tactic contrasted with the Conservatives avoidance of traditional media scrums on the Hill that always promised the risk that the agenda would be distorted. Notably, the Conservatives' five priorities message was consistently coordinated from the platform, on their campaign website, in the Throne Speeches, and also in Harper's addresses. Each political communication object demonstrated the salience of their key issues.

By 2008, minority government may have taken its toll on Harper as his first

Throne Speech lacked focus in its messages around the economic downturn, and his official speech output dropped while he was dealing with the Coalition Government crisis. When the House returned in 2009 after the first prorogation, his second Throne Speech set the Conservative government's tone for the rest of the minority government, with the focus on the "Canada Economic Action Plan." This message remained for the third session Throne Speech and in the rest of Harper's addresses until 2011, despite the on-going pressure from the opposition parties to challenge the Conservatives' messages on particular agenda issues like Afghanistan, crime, and military spending.

No standard metric for tracking and establishing the success of a government's agenda came to light in the review of analyses of the government outlays. However, this analysis provided a unique insight into what issues were being communicated by the government to accomplish its agenda as compared to what they did accomplish. The evidence presented in this chapter adds to the conversation started in Savoie's *Court Government* (2008) by arguing that a link between issue units and language frames impacts policy agendas, and research in this area has been missing in Canadian agenda-setting research.

The issue units analysis above demonstrated the power of the PMO to communicate a consistent message when the leader used the levers of power to steer the ship of government, even when it was not capable of completing its agenda, as was the case for Harper in the 2008-2011 period. The PMO in 2006-2008 was able to control its five priorities agenda through the adept coordination of its communication across different political communication fronts, including the platform, the party's electoral website, the Throne Speeches, and in the prime minister's addresses.

Similarly, Harper and the centralized PMO regained control of their communication during the latter two parliamentary sessions from 2009-2011. The first prorogation period allowed the weaknesses of the coalition partnership to be exposed, and for the opposition parties' to be divided by anxieties and fears of backlash from the voters because of polls. The Conservatives implemented the "Economic Action Plan" budget that framed the Conservatives as the inventors of the stimulus package, and in truth, the other parties just waited to see what they would come up with, instead of forwarding their own plan ahead of the government. This allowed the Conservatives to claim leadership on the issue, and control the agenda. Harper's second use of prorogation stopped all controversial bills and committee work, completing halting government again, but allowing the Conservatives to rebuild their strategies to once again reframe their agenda before the 2011 election.

Overall, the *Executive Styles* of both leaders were revealed in Throne Speeches and addresses as that of a centralized government under the prime minister's leadership, with little mention of other *Institutional Factors* like the Cabinet or the House, beyond the basic issue units that each put forward. Both documents can, therefore, be viewed as representing the PMO's chosen framing strategies directly. The prime minister's addresses were especially unique in terms of their uses as *Media Technologies* to set the agenda because of their seasonality and application in communicating the budget to the electorate. Both the Throne Speeches and prime ministerial speeches in the Internet era are now posted online and are easily accessible; they therefore represent the living agenda for the government's lifespan.

The broad analysis of issue units documented in the platforms, websites, and

speeches can now be complemented through a focus on two in-depth case studies, one focusing on the gun registry as a Conservative wedge issue (in chapter eight), and the other focusing on how the Harper PMO framed Coalition Government as undemocratic (in chapter nine).

## Chapter Eight
## A Case Study of Agenda Setting by Proxy: Canada's Firearms Registry

> After 15 years, opposition to the long-gun registry is stronger in this country than it has ever been. With the vote tonight, its abolition is closer than it has ever been. The people of the regions of this country are never going to accept being treated like criminals and we will continue our efforts until this registry is finally abolished.
>
> - Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper (September 22, 2010)

Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered the above statement following the defeat of backbench MP Candice Hoeppner's Private Members' Bill (PMB) C-391, a bill to dismantle the long-gun registry. The bill did not pass its second reading; losing by one of the closest margins in Canadian parliamentary history. All 142 Conservative party MPs voted in support of C-391, but the combined efforts of the three opposition parties stopped the PMB by a margin of 153-151 votes, despite three independents and six members of the NDP voting with the Conservatives.

Michael Ignatieff, then Liberal opposition leader, viewed the vote as a whipped government bill disguised as a PMB, and he consequently chose to whip the Liberal vote. NDP leader Jack Layton, however, allowed a free vote among his party members claiming he was following the party's tradition, but managed to negotiate enough votes from his anti-registry rural MPs to see that the bill did not pass (Galloway, 2010). The six rural NDP members who voted with the Conservatives were primarily from ridings where their principal competition was from Liberal candidates. This allowed the NDP, in effect, to have it both ways: defend gun control in Quebec and urban centres, and fight for gun owners in some key rural ridings.

Why were the Conservative party's resources put into a controversial and divisive issue that benefited a narrow segment of mostly rural Canadians during a period of

instability in the federal legislature? If the gun registry issue was of such high importance for the Conservatives, why didn't the party leader or a key minister champion it, instead of leaving it with relative unknowns like Garry Breitkreuz prior to December 2002, or with Candice Hoeppner in 2010?

The Conservative right has answered the question with the framing that they always thought the gun registry was a public money waste, it did not save lives, it did not reduce crime, and it intruded on the privacy of Canadians' rights to bear arms. The left has consistently argued that despite the initial cost overruns; lives have been saved; key public stakeholders like police, doctors and lawyers support it; and as of 2008, the registry's costs according to the Auditor General and the RCMP had stabilized and were decreasing. Further questions on the left included, why were the "Tough on Crime" Conservatives supporting keeping the handgun registry (an urban issue), while scrapping the (rural) long gun portion that might save at most $2-$3 million dollars? Why were the Conservatives keeping another $1 billion boondoggle in the Service Canada Secure Channel, a two-way encryption protocol, to supposedly recoup its costs by forcing the public administration to use it (May, 2008, *The Ottawa Citizen*, 2008), while choosing to slash a different bureaucratic IT system in the gun registry?

This chapter uses this case study as an example of where the PMO used proxies to distance itself from a controversial and divisive issue that potentially could weaken its "law and order" stance and support from police groups, but simultaneously set the agenda by proxy. It was a tactic that allowed the Conservatives to shore up their base, while strategically targeting and weakening support for opposition MPs in rural ridings in preparation for narrowcast regional attack advertisements during the 2011 election.

This chapter examines the role of controversial wedge issues like gun control, and the role political backbencher played in terms of framing the Conservative party's position.[22] Two Conservative backbench MPs were given party support to test partisan agenda-setting framing messages through their PMBs during the launch of potentially controversial policies at arm's length from the caucus. The framing of the Canadian Firearms Registry is analyzed as a case study in the prime minister's agenda setting by proxy by tracking the breadth of rhetoric used by the Canada's federal parties in *Hansard* during three key time periods: (i) February 14, 1995 to June 21, 1995: the readings and debate of the *Canada Firearms Act* Bill C-68; (ii) November 18, 2002 to December 6, 2002: the lead-up to, and release of, Auditor General Sheila Fraser's report on 3 December 2002; and (iii) April 5, 2006 to June 6, 2008: committee and House debates of Bill C-21, when the Conservative Government first pushed to scrap the long gun registry component of the Canadian Firearms Registry, while some fringe party members supported scrapping the *entire* registry including the handgun portion.

To demonstrate the rural/urban wedge and the PM's agenda-setting initiative, the following research questions are asked and answered for the three periods tracked in *Hansard* to compare the language used by the key political actors over time, and to provide evidence of how the Liberal and Conservative frames developed and were mobilized:

1. Which parties had the most MPs speak on the issue?
2. Which parties spoke the most words on the issue?

[22] Wedge issues were the invention of U.S. Republican campaign manager Lee Atwater, who notably used the issues of God (religion), guns (second amendment rights), and gays (same sex equality), to win the Southern states in the 1970s at the Democrat's expense through the use of controversial polarizing frames.

3. Which MPs spoke the most frequently on the issue?
4. Which advocacy groups are named in *Hansard* by each party?
5. Overall, what happened in the Parliament every day on "gun control," "The *Firearms Act*," and since 2008, "the long gun registry" debates?

*Hansard* is an important technology that is "integrated" into political practices, and there are consequences for the uses of political technologies like it (Marres & Rogers, 2005, p. 5). Although it is not the only sphere of debate, *Hansard* is a record of the proceedings of Parliament and is often used to document the commitment of MPs to their constituents; for example, in relaying riding petitions, speaking on issues, or acknowledging constituents.

The following analysis of *Hansard* shows how governing parties allow backbenchers to present PMBs as trial balloons and, if they gain traction with the media and wider public, the government may tacitly promote them (Blidook, 2010). Backbench MP Candice Hoeppner's PMB C-391 is a perfect example of this case, but her work was an extension of years of work by another single-issue backbencher, Garry Breitkreuz and his earlier PMB C-301 (2009).

Breitkreuz has represented the Yorkton-Melville, Saskatchewan riding for three different political parties on the gun registry issue: the Reform party, Canadian Alliance, and eventually the Conservative party. Breitkreuz was a steady, self-described "firebrand" on the gun control issue since his election to Parliament as an opposition Reform party member in 1993, but his anti-gun registry message failed to have any lasting impact in the House for a decade. He became the party critic of the gun registry issue for the Canadian Alliance in April 2002, shortly after Stephen Harper became leader and after the first story broke on the registry's possible overspending on 7

February 2002 (Mercury, 2002). Since 2002, he had his responsibilities reduced to "Assistant/Associate Critic" on the issue twice, which for a controversial single-issue backbencher has been explained by the party élite attempting to control him as the Conservative party was professionalizing their image away from their previous fringe Reform party/Canadian Alliance elements.

Armed with the Auditor General Sheila Fraser's report on December 3rd 2002, Breitkreuz as critic extended the newly-formed Conservative party's agenda-setting frame on the gun registry—from calling the registry ineffective and a money-waster, to calling it a "$1 billion" boondoggle (*Hansard*, 11.28.2002: 14:20pm), and then a "$2 billion" boondoggle (*Hansard*, 3.25.2003: 10:25am). While he attacked the costs, a chorus of backbench Canadian Alliance (Andy Burton, Bob Mills, Charlie Penson, and Grant McNally) and Progressive Conservatives MPs (including Peter MacKay) supported his work by framing the gun registry with the term "boondoggle", which was already common frame for other Liberal programs like the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) funding ideological research, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) overruns, the Kyoto Protocol, and eventually the Sponsorship Program scandal. In his role of critic, Breitkreuz did not distinguish between the program's licensing costs (gun owners must be screened and renew licenses every five years) and the registration costs (the firearms must be registered). Nor did he differentiate between one time and ongoing costs.

The new $2 billion framing, however, dominated the media and eventually became the entire Conservative party frame. The question arises, what difference did the extension of the frame make when the Auditor General's official numbers of $1 billion

over ten years clearly were nowhere near Breitkreuz's $2 billion estimates? Why would the $2 billion boondoggle frame become perpetuated in the media echo chamber with *hundreds* of articles published using the mythical figure since 2002?

The answer lies in the political communication apparatus of controlling the national agenda through framing language and wedge politics. The following textual analysis of the "gun control" issue in *Hansard* is provided to illustrate the range of rhetoric used by the top national parties for their agenda-setting frames from the development of the *Canada Firearms Act* (1995) to Hoeppner's PMB C-391 (2010). The analysis demonstrates how one frame came to dominant the other as part of the Conservative strategy to attract rural voters, while also weakening the Liberal and NDP opposition in rural ridings.

**I. The Problem: How have Backbenchers Influenced the Gun Control Agenda?**

Former Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau famously asserted that backbench MPs, like Candice Hoeppner or Garry Breitkreuz, were "nobodies" when they were 50 yards from Parliament Hill (Atkinson and Docherty, 2000). Backbenchers generally vote with their party or face censure or expulsion, thereby losing opportunities for advancement (Whittington, 2000, p. 45). White's survey of the role of backbenchers in government similarly found that it is generally not a practice in either the Federal government or in a majority of provincial legislatures to have backbench input into cabinet policies or committees, and instead the backbencher follows the instructions of the cabinet (White, 2005). Still, Atkinson and Docherty suggested that backbenchers have influenced the shape of policy through their assistant/critic roles, and "are better known

and are more influential away from Parliament Hill than they are on it" (Atkinson and Docherty, 2000, p. 14). They cited instances where backbenchers have brought regional interests into the political agenda, like that of MPs from the Prairie Provinces, Northern Ontario or Quebeckers that sometimes can become cabinet members due to reasons of representation.

While backbenchers sometimes introduce Private Members' Bills (PMBs), these seldom become law. Blidook's research focused on PMBs and motions from 2001 to 2007 (inclusive of all sessions during the 37th to the 39th Parliaments). He found that motions had averaged about 453 introductions per session with approximately 87 individual MPs introducing them (Blidook, 2010, p. 36). Motions, however, have no legal standing if passed, and are instead used to guide House business once adopted. For this reason, PMBs are obviously more influential than motions because they are directly passed into law.

PMBs do affect change (i) directly, through a PMB being passed, and (ii) indirectly, through a failed PMB eventually leading to changes in other bills and official policy (Blidook, 2010, p. 36). Blidook found an average of 12.7% of government bills had earlier PMB determinants, but he noted that the number could be higher if backroom discussions and informal determinants were measurable in some way. He also demonstrated that during minority parliaments PMBs had a higher success rate in recent years because of the consistent increase of their use by MPs during the minority government period. MPs were using them as a way to influence the weakened government.

Changes to the rules governing PMBs in 1986 and 2001 made some of these improvements possible in terms of promoting PMBs as democratic tools for backbenchers. Government MPs' PMB introductions were less common under the Liberals though, with the majority of PMBs coming under the Conservatives. Government PMB introductions accounted for eventual bills by 3/11 in 2001-2004 (Liberal majority); 3/20 in 2004-6 (Liberal minority), but 15/25 in 2006-10 (Conservative minority) (Blidook, 2010, p. 47). These numbers do not provide overwhelming evidence that the PMBs are separate from party leader initiatives and questions still remain about caucus influence on the PMBs.

Beyond Blidook's work on PMBs, the *Hansard* record of debates on gun control demonstrated many dynamic and complex ways that governments, through the use of framing language, can instead use their backbench MPs to influence agendas and policies. To date, research on gun control had been primarily qualitative and interpretive (Bottomley, 2003; Boyd, 2004; Pal, 2003), or focused on the how advocacy and polls affected the gun control policy (Page, 2006). Page used confidential interviews with civil servants who described how the Coalition for Gun Control was effective in helping to set and frame the Liberal government's agenda because the group's research and efforts "offset part of the pressure created by the gun users' organizations" (Page, 2006, p. 135).

While some may speculate that parties established their positions in response to public opinion polls, Page actually concluded that "Overall, polling had a visible but not a large role in the policy" (Page, 2006, p. 157). He noted, instead, that polls were employed after the parties were already committed to their positions. As well, both qualitative and quantitative research had noted significant levels of opposition to the

policy within the Liberal party and within the opposition parties; these histories end in 2006, with little mention of backbench MPs' involvement.

## II. Background: The Canada Firearms Act and Partisan Frames

Canada's history of gun control is influenced by a shared heritage of Great Britain's commonwealth values and of its southern neighbour, the United States. Britain's traditions favour public safety; the country is widely known to hold some of the world's strictest gun control regulations, with handguns being banned in all but the two instances of sporting or for work-related reasons (see Britain's 1997 Firearms Act: C64, Section One). In contrast, the gun lobby of the United States consistently works to enforce the nation's second amendment constitutional rights that allow citizens to keep and bear arms, including handguns, despite the law having been crafted in the 18th century before automatic weapons and high calibre firearms existed. Comparatively, Canada's firearm homicide rate of 0.54 per 100,000 people sits between the United States at 3.97 and Britain's 0.12 respectively (United Nations, 2006).

Canada's gun control laws were revised in the aftermath of the horrific and tragic Montreal Massacre at École Polytechnique that occurred on December 6, 1989, when twenty-five-year old Marc Lépine, armed with a semi-automatic firearm, murdered ten women, and wounded ten other women and four men, before killing himself. The Brian Mulroney Conservative government responded to the shooting by passing Bill C-17 in 1991 to strengthen screening for Firearm Acquisition Certificates (among other measures).

In 1995, the new gun control system in Canada was introduced by the Liberal

government as part of the *Canada Firearms Act* (Bill C-68), intended to replace an older system that cost $30 million a year to administer. Bill C-68 required renewable licenses for two million gun owners and the registration of the make, model, and serial number of approximately seven million firearms. The screening associated with renewable licenses was intended to reduce the risk dangerous people would get access to firearms. The one-time registration of firearms was intended to increase the accountability of gun owners, to help enforce the licensing provisions, to reduce the chances of diversion to illegal markets, and to support law enforcement.

A new computerized system was developed to support the licensing and registration processes. That system was soon referred to as "the registry" even though most of the activity (and complexity) associated with it related to the screening and licensing processes rather than the registration of firearms. For example, interfaces had to be built with hundreds of individual police information systems to gain access to data considered to be important in assessing risk (e.g., domestic violence complaints). The Liberal-led efforts under Jean Chrétien were an extension of stronger gun control initiatives that had been initiated by Brian Mulroney's Conservative government through Bill C-17. While in opposition, the Liberal and New Democratic parties (as well as the Conservative-dominated Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs) advocated further measures including the registration of all firearms.

Conceptually, the process of licensing and registration was similar to many other risk reduction strategies such as the licensing of drivers and registration of vehicles. Tracking systems are also used to reduce the chances of misuse of dangerous goods such as harmful chemicals, nuclear material, military weaponry, or pharmaceuticals, following

cradle to grave systems analysis. However, many large-scale information technology projects in the 1990s were late and over-budget because of the newness of technology budgets, and this project was no exception. The initial projections dramatically under-estimated the complexity of the undertaking.

Other problems arose, as well, like the refusal of some provinces to administer the program, which led to the need to build a centralized system. It has recently become clear that the registry costs became so high because implementation delays ensued in the face of two Supreme Court challenges, as well as ongoing provincial political efforts to stifle the power of Bill C-68. The Liberals were thereby forced to construct a centralized gun registry system to fulfil their election promise, rather than being able to rely on pre-existing provincial capacity to do the job (Bottomley, 2004; Boyd, 2003). Significant resources were also required to help firearm owners complete the forms accurately, and this fuelled the ballooning costs of the program at the same time that fees were waived to promote compliance, thus eroding the projected revenues.

On June 14, 1995, then Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Canada, Alan Rock, stated in the House, “I very much believe in 10 years we’ll look back at the registration of all firearms and wonder what the fuss was about”. Rock’s statement might have become true if not for work on three fronts: (i) Sheila Fraser and her audit, (ii) MP Garry Breitkreuz and his extensive anti-gun control work, and (iii) extensive anti-registry advocacy by a range of groups and firearms enthusiasts such as Professor Gary Mauser from Simon Fraser University.

In 2002, Auditor General Sheila Fraser’s work did not support the gun advocates’ claims that the gun registry was ineffective as a gun control mechanism or as an aid in

combating gun crime, despite their hopes to prod her in those directions. However, it was certainly leveraged by the Harper Conservatives to support their anti-registry frame. In his 2007 autobiography, Chrétien explained his very pragmatic use of the gun control issue in the 1997 election when it was dividing his caucus:

> I explained at the time. "First, leadership is a question of judgment. Sometimes it's wrong to be too rigid. Sometimes you have to take the pressure off the MPs and show a bit of understanding and flexibility. Second, don't be worried—gun control is good for you even if it's unpopular in your riding. I'll tell you why. Every one of you is running against Reform and the Conservatives. Reform will feed on the fact that the Tories are taking a more ambiguous position in order to get votes in the cities and, therefore, it will get votes of the hard-line opponents of gun control. *So this issue divides them, and any issue that divides them will make your life easier*." (Chrétien, 2007, p. 210, *emphasis added*)

Prior to the 1997 election campaign, Chrétien removed three Liberal caucus members from parliamentary committees after they voted against the second reading of the gun bill, rather than kick them out of caucus. The decision was his "flexible" compromise on the issue to appease the rest of the caucus who called the three "traitors". In the ensuing election, Chrétien then used the issue to successfully divide the splintered opposition parties as he described. This framing tactic has since been refined by the united right under Harper.

It is important to place the registry costs into context, not just to comment on the Liberal party's management of public funds, but instead to understand the importance of cost in this framing debate. The old gun registry system cost $30 million a year (over ten years = $300 million); it was definitely in need of an upgrade, which Bill C-68 was attempting to provide.

The known costs of the *new* registry, as cited by the Auditor General, have been outlined by others, but are listed here as follows:

1) **1995**: Initial estimates of the cost were $119 million, but revenues generated by registration would mean that net cost to the taxpayer would be in the $2 million range;

2) **December 3, 2002**: Sheila Fraser's first audit suggested the gun registry could cost $1 billion by 2005, with registration fees offsetting $140 million;

3) **March 25, 2003**: "Without an infusion of an additional $59 million, the registry would not have enough money to make it to the end of the fiscal year" (Bottomley, 2004);

4) **February 13, 2004**: French CBC's *Zone Libre* claimed that the registry had cost $2 billion so far (citing Garry Breitkreuz's estimated numbers); and

5) **May 18, 2006**: Fraser's latest report stated,

> The program's total net cost to March 2005 was reported by the government as $946 million, a little under its earlier estimate of $1 billion. But operational problems remain. For example, there are still problems in the registration database – the Centre does not know how many of its records are incorrect or incomplete. As well, the information system it is developing is three years late, its costs have grown from the original budget of $32 million to $90 million, and it still is not operational. (39:1 Committee Evidence - PACP-4)

At this point, the Firearms Registry cost management issues, according to Fraser's latest work, had been corrected, stabilized, and the complete registry cost was decreasing from its $80 million a year high.

The cost of the registry in terms of public safety is difficult to quantify. Some – such as Liberal MP Susan Kadis – feel that if the $1 billion saved one life, it was worth it (*Hansard*, 6.19.07). MP Sue Barnes (Liberal: London West) framed the *Canadian Firearms Act* in 1995 as a public safety issue in terms of costs:

> When law-abiding, responsible gun owners kill and injure themselves and others, aside from the lost lives of 1,400 Canadians there is a very real dollar figure, $70 million a year in primary health costs and related public services in this country paid for by Canadian taxpayers. (*Hansard*, 6.13.95: 13746)

Conservative MPs definitely do not share such sentiments, given the frames presented above, although other contextualizing costs can help to situate the importance of the

public safety frame. For example, a Canadian Medical Association article placed the costs of gun death and injury in Canada at $6.6 billion (1993 Canadian dollar value) in 1991 (Miller, 1995). The Geneva Small Arms Survey stated that productivity losses due to firearms are $1.6 billion annually (Graduate Institute, 2006). A comparison can be made to other safety investments: A Coalition for Gun Control report, *Continued funding for the Firearms Program is essential to public safety* (2004), provided the example that $400 million was used to fix a stretch of road in New Brunswick where forty-three lives were lost between 1996 and 2000. By comparison, Canada records more than one thousand gun deaths every year.

Another comparison can be made with per capita costs of other government programs: Legal Aid spending in Canada per year, which arguably is very low compared to other Western nations, totalled $583 million (02-03) and $659 million (06-07) (Tyler, 2008). The per capita cost was $18.59 (02-03) and $20.19 (06-07) (Tyler, 2008). By comparison, the gun registry costs every Canadian $2.81/year at its current cost. Similarly, Canada's Passport Office costs $125 million a year (over ten years = $1.25 billion) to register travellers.

From 1993-2003, the gun control agenda-setting frame of "public safety" in Canada was managed and mainly set by the federal Liberals in the House, consistently backed by their majority governments. This changed when Canada's Auditor General Sheila Fraser released her report on the Canadian Firearms Registry on December 3, 2002. Fraser's audit revealed that cost overruns were significant, ballooning to nearly $1 billion over ten years (1996-2006), despite initial estimates that the net cost would be $2 million per year.

More significant was the lack of transparency; Fraser emphasized the main auditing issue was the Liberals' lack of sharing the costs with Parliament, not gun control or the cost overruns. After the audit revealed over spending on the registry (five months after Breitkreuz became critic), the framing dominance shifted to the description that had previously been set predominantly by Breitkreuz at arm's length from the party leadership, but by the end of 2002, it would be taken up by the Conservative party leadership when the registry overspending frame gained traction.

The Auditor General's report also provided ammunition to gun control opponents in the Liberal caucus. For example, after the report, the Liberal caucus refused to vote for the supplementary estimates needed to fund the licensing and registration system, some even called for then Justice Minister Allan Rock's resignation (Harper and Chung, 2002). The Liberals brought in Raymond Hession, a former senior bureaucrat, with the aid of management consulting firm HLB Decision Economics Inc., to review ways to make the program more cost-effective (CTV News, 2003). Apart from the substantive issues, politics within the Liberal party created difficulties in offering a consistent frame that would silence the Conservative registry-backlash based on the cost.

The firearms registry was strongly linked to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's regime in his favoured leadership replacement, Liberal Justice Minister Allan Rock. Around this time, then Finance Minister Paul Martin began an informal leadership campaign and conflicts ensued with the Chrétien/Rock camp when Martin's team placed pressure on Chrétien to resign in 2002. This culminated with Martin's resignation as Finance Minister in 2003, and Chrétien's subsequent resignation as Prime Minister. Consequently, the Conservative critics of the registry had some strong allies in the

Liberal party among supporters of Paul Martin such as backbenchers Roger Galaway, Albina Guenierri and Paul Steckle. This eroded the ability of the Liberals to provide a united front in framing their support for the registry.

Martin decided to take on the registry's issues shortly after becoming Prime Minister on December 12th, 2003 – "to lance the boil" as one advisor described it, in an appeal to Western Canadian voters (Taber, 2004). However, the firearms registry soon became linked to the Sponsorship Program scandal identified in another Fraser audit released on February 10, 2004. Without the Liberals offering a strong and consistent frame to propose a solution to the registry problems, the registry as a "$2 billion boondoggle" continued to be cited in the House, the media, and by critics such as the Canadian Taxpayer's Federation. Fraser's subsequent audits as well as her testimony before committees and the media confirmed that the registry cost under $1 billion over ten years and that most of the money was spent on screening and licensing gun owners, not on registering firearms.

Still, MP Garry Breitkreuz's frame is now taken for granted in the media as the $2 billion registry, with hundreds of articles having been published since 2008 containing the figure without any supported analysis (see Table 63).

**Table 63: Canadian Articles on "Gun Registry" and "$2 Billion" in Factiva**

| **Year** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Freq.** | 19 | 43 | 101 | 94 | 92 | 11 | 16 | 55 | 98 | 322 |

Harper himself had even taken to using the $2 billion figure during the 2011 election. One *Winnipeg Sun* article suggested, without basis, that the gun registry cost is at "$20 billion" (Quesnel, 2008); no retraction has been printed, so it cannot be assumed this was simply a misprint.

Despite the frame's successful uptake, Brietkreuz's views were initially very controversial for the executive Conservative party members as he was implicated in a number of high profile public incidents about his gun advocacy that were embarrassing to the government. The incidents included his being invited to speak at a National Rifle Association (NRA) event in 2006, and in 2009, being invited to a Canadian Shooting Sports Association dinner where a handgun was being raffled off (CTV News, 2009; CBC News, 2010). The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) attempted to distance itself from his extremist positions by shifting primary responsibility for advancing opposition to gun control from an old time reformer to a "modern", articulate and attractive woman in MP Candice Hoeppner to better debate women and victims organizations.

Based on cost over runs, the Conservatives' campaign to scrap the gun registry has been a sub-agenda item of their larger "Tough on Crime" promise since their 2006 election. Canadian journalist Paul Wells (2007) noted that the Conservative party had since the 2006 election become more adept at framing issues in the media and using particular agenda items like the gun registry as divisive wedge issues. Wells described one of the central events that depicts how "issue framing" worked to the Tories' advantage in the Jane Creba Yonge Street shooting on Boxing day, December 26th, 2005.

The gang-related shooting on one of Canada's busiest streets in Toronto was a silent bomb that triggered a mass media reaction and widespread public responses to stop the violence. Wells described one instance of the Conservatives' framing in response to the event during the 2006 election campaign as follows:

> …the Tory war room telephoned candidates across the country, urging them to stand down and make no public comment until Harper had had a chance to set the tone himself the next morning. Meanwhile, the war-room researchers worked overnight, gleaning details of Martin's impending announcement from

> the news accounts, and lining up arguments against it. In the end, Martin's gun announcement produced more criticism of the Liberals for opportunism and sloppy policy design than coverage – pro or con – of the Conservative response. (Wells, 2007, p.188)

Former Liberal leader Paul Martin's particular announcement came when many Canadians were calling for a handgun ban in urban environments. The Tory spin machine framed the Liberal announcement as a knee-jerk reaction to one isolated event which was capitalizing on the victims. Opinion polls demonstrated that Tories were suddenly more favourable after the Christmas break that year because of their tough on crime agenda and management of the issue (Wells, 2006; *National Post*, 2006). The framing did not cost the Tories votes, instead the shooting demonstrated for some Canadians that the gun registry did not work to stop violent urban crime (which was the frame fostered by Breitkreuz since 1995).

As of 2008, many have argued including then Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff that the registry was effectively built and maintained efficiently by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). According to the Auditor General and committee reports, scrapping the registry would save $2-3 million—a marginal cost for a budget that is now lower than the 1990s registry—but the Conservatives had held back these reports of cost analyses of the registry for partisan reasons before the recent Hoeppner PMB vote (Geddes, 2009).

Within this context of costs, police organizations consistently maintained that the registry system was an important tool for law enforcement officers, using it nearly 11,000 times a day.[23] In spring 2009, an *Ottawa Citizen* article reported that police had

[23] Steven Chabot, President of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, was quoted, in April 2009, as saying "almost 10,000 times per day": 'Public safety will be at risk if gun registry is dismantled' (*The Toronto Star*, 2009, p. A23). By the end of September 2009, the system was accessed by police "an

confiscated 3560 guns nationally, which "would have been more difficult, if not impossible, to locate and confiscate" without the registry (MacLeod, 2009). Public health analysts maintained that gun-related deaths had decreased in Canada since the new *Firearms Act* became law (Snider, Ovens, Drummond & Kapur, 2009; Cukier & Sidel, 2006). Pro-gun advocates maintained, though, that the registry had been ineffective and cited costs as the main reason why the gun registry should be dismantled in whole (Breitkreuz, 2009; Mauser, 2009; 2005; 2004; 2003; 2001a; 2001b), or in part (see numerous entries in *Hansard*, or the Conservative platform that supports the dismantling of the long gun registry only).

Canada's 2010 vote to save the firearms registry from Hoeppner's Bill C-391 followed a media storm as polls demonstrated that the Canadian population was split on the matter. A CBC poll claimed that 38 per cent would have voted to abolish the registry, 31 per cent to keep it, and the rest were undecided or had no response (CBC, 2009). Later polls closer to the vote demonstrated that 44 per cent of Canadians want it scrapped and 35 per cent to keep it (Walkom, 2010). Another poll indicated that there was an urban/rural split on the issue, with cities demonstrating higher support for keeping the registry (Vondouangchanh, 2010). With such national controversy, media coverage exploded from relative silence on the issue in 2009 to hundreds of articles per week appearing in newspapers leading up to the second vote on C-391 during September, 2010.

From this descriptive review, the Conservatives clearly had adapted the use of backbench PMBs to forward controversial agenda items, such as Candice Hoeppner or Garry Breitkreuz's efforts to scrap the gun registry, because PMBs involved free votes in

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average of 10,818 times a day," according to an RCMP report released by the Conservative government only after Bill C-391 was given second reading: "Firearms database popular with police: Tories release report on registry use two days after key Commons vote" (*The Toronto Star*, 2009, p. A8).

the House and they were not confidence motions during minority government situations. Further, backbench MPs were not followed as closely by the Canadian media as cabinet members or opposition leaders due to the Canadian public's fickle attention for politics. The Conservatives had been criticized in the media and by opposition parties for nonetheless whipping the PMB votes because every member of the party had voted in support of their bills, which returned the media focus to the controversial backbenchers and their PMBs, rather than the party élite.

To date, framing research on Canada's gun control debates has not been conducted previously, particularly pertaining to media. In the U.S., McCombs's research on agenda-setting and framing language in American debates about gun control found two main competing frames: (i) public safety and (ii) a "culture of violence" frame. He described the uses of these frames in a nine-year analysis of the U.S. debate about gun control that "significant links between the attention of network television news and the flood of press releases from interest groups on both sides of the issue" (McCombs, 2004, p. 113). Frames analysis revealed that the "culture of violence" theme dominated in nearly half of the news stories, but figured less than a quarter in congressional statements and a sixth in press releases. McCombs summarized, "Although this may celebrate the independence of the media voice, it is simultaneously a failure to 'move the discussion beyond a simplified emotive framework to a more reasoned policy debate'" (McCombs, 2004, p. 114).

McCombs analysis simultaneously demonstrated media bias as well as the power interest groups like the National Rifle Association (NRA) has to influence the U.S. Congress when it comes to limiting the creation of progressive policy concerning gun

control. Overall, the study identified that news media preferred the spectacular narrative imperative and selected dramatic 'culture of violence' frames. Will similar thematic frames be found in the Canadian case when *Hansard* is the source of the analysis?

## III. MPs and the Federal Party Frames in *Hansard*: Then and Now

Two types of techniques were required to focus on the phrases "Firearms Act" and "gun control" in *Hansard* for the three periods investigated in this analysis. For the first two periods, ending in 2002, simple searches for the issue units "firearms," "gun," "Firearms Act," and "gun control" were conducted manually and the text was completely cut and paste into a Microsoft Excel file. For the final 2006-2008 period, a comparison test for bias in the new 2006 federal *Hansard*'s indexing system was conducted by simply copying any e-indexed files listed there. In other words, the 2006-2008 period does not include the entire text on "firearms" and "gun control" as do the earlier two periods.

The main reasons for the second scraping technique were the size of the period studied, and the change in *Hansard*'s indexing system that facilitated its possibility. At present, the federal public service does not offer any thorough explanation of its new indexing system online, but officials indicated that the approach is based on subject analysis from a common political user's perspective (Wallner, 2008). Beyond those methodological limitations, free, open source, and commonly available software was used to complete the simple quantitative analyses of word frequency; specifically, the HyperPo e-concordance tool and Hugh Craig's Intelligent Archive were used to ensure the word counts for each particular frame (or "issue unit") were consistent.

At its most basic, textual analysis can offer quick answers to questions about the sample taken over the three periods such as which parties spoke the most frequently on "gun control". Table 64 and Table 65 below present two quantifiable ways of understanding the work of MPs on this issue.

1. Which parties had the most MPs speak on the issue in each period?

Table 64 below lists the number MPs who spoke on the topic of gun control in each of the three periods, as listed in the *Hansard* sample. The balance of power in each period is demonstrated in this table by listing the number of MPs who spoke alongside the total number of seats for each party.

**Table 64: MPs' Frequency of Speech in *Hansard* by Party**

| Party | 1995-1996 | Fraser Audit 2002 | 2006-2008 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bloc Quebecois (BQ) | 16 / 54 | 5 / 38 | 22 / 54 |
| Canadian Alliance (CA) | - | 20 / 66 | - |
| Conservatives (CP) | - | - | 59 / 124 |
| Liberals (LP) | 69 / 177 | 11 / 172 | 39 / 103 |
| NDP | 5 / 9 | 3 / 13 | 11 / 19 |
| Progressive Conservatives (PC) | 0 / 2 | 6 / 12 | - |
| Reform (RP) | 46 / 52 | - | - |

**NOTE:** The balance of power in each period is demonstrated in this table by listing the number of MPs who spoke alongside the seats for each party.

Generally, it is clear that the opposition Reform party was proportionally the most vocal on gun control during the writing of the initial bill, with the Liberal majority leading the design of the bill. During the Fraser Audit period, only 11 Liberals defended it, even though they were in power at the time.

2. Which parties spoke the most words on the issue?

Table 65 below lists the total number of words spoken by each party in its entirety for each period.

| Table 65: Party by Words Spoken | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Party** | **1995-1996** | **Fraser Audit 2002** | **2006-2008** |
| Bloc Quebecois (BQ) | 14730 | 2883 | 24138 |
| Canadian Alliance (CA) | - | 13725 | - |
| Conservatives (CP) | - | - | 86519 |
| Liberals (LP) | 101014 | 6146 | 49339 |
| NDP | 5792 | 588 | 20620 |
| Progressive Conservatives (PC) | 0 | 2572 | - |
| Reform (RP) | 93825 | - | - |

There is a story here that needs more exploration considering that the distribution of seats in these periods does not match the proportions of speech by party. A key imbalance exists in 2002, particularly in that the Canadian Alliance spoke more frequently than the Liberals who were in power at the time. Drilling into *Hansard*, it can be found that the Liberal Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Canada, Martin Cauchon, spoke the most frequently for the Liberals on this subject (29 times), but his answers are mostly short deflections of opposition attacks during Question Period.

Prime Minister Chrétien is not registered as speaking in the House on the topic of the Canada Firearms Registry audit until Monday, December 9th, when he responded to opposition leader Stephen Harper and defended the gun registry's administration based on the government having another surplus in 2002. In comparison, then opposition leader Stephen Harper spoke ten times. Until Friday, December 13th, when the House closed for the winter holiday break, the "boondoggle" attacks from the opposition parties continued on all fronts for the Liberals, but no further responses came from the Liberals as the House was awaiting a second audit from a private firm.

3. Which MPs spoke the most frequently on the issue?

In the following Tables 66 to 68, the dominant players and key agents in each party can be noted by their frequency of speaking in the sample of each period. Perhaps not surprisingly, the story from analyzing the top actors mirrors accounts of the partisan east/west split on the vote, as well as the urban/rural split. In the 1995 period, all of the Reform party MPs speaking were from rural ridings, and in the latter two periods only Stephen Harper (Table 67) and Stockwell Day (Table 68) directly spoke representing the party executive out the top speakers. As well, the top critics from the other opposition parties were from rural ridings.

| Table 66: Top Five MPs's Frequency 1995 *Hansard* on "Gun Control" | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No.** | **Party** | **MP Name, Region/Position** | **Freq.** | **Frame** |
| 1 | BQ | Pierrette Venne, Saint-Hubert | 29 | Pro gun control, but critical of cost accounting. |
| 2 | BQ | Michel Bellehumeur, Berthier-Montcalm | 11 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | BQ | Paul Crête, Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup | 5 | Pro gun control. |
| 4 | BQ | Osvaldo Nunez, Bourassa | 5 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | BQ | André Caron, Jonquière | 4 | Pro gun control. |
| 6 | BQ | Jean-Paul Marchand, Québec-Est | 3 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 16 BQ MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Lib | Allan Rock, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada | 92 | Pro gun control. |
| 2 | Lib | Russell MacLellan, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada | 16 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | Lib | Don Boudria, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell | 9 | Pro gun control. |
| 4 | Lib | Andy Mitchell, Parry Sound-Muskoka | 8 | Critical of gun control, but voted for it. |
| 5 | Lib | Jack Iyerak Anawak, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | Lib | Peter Milliken, Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 69 Liberal MPs are listed in this sample in total. 51 are backbenchers. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | NDP | Len Taylor, The Battlefords-Meadow Lake | 5 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 2 | NDP | Nelson Riis, Kamloops | 5 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 3 | NDP | Audrey McLaughlin, Yukon | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 4 | NDP | Chris Axworthy, Saskatoon-Clark's Crossing | 1 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | NDP | Simon de Jong, Regina-Qu'Appelle | 1 | Against Bill C-68. |
| NOTE: 5 NDP MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Ref | Jack Ramsay, Crowfoot | 64 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 2 | Ref | Garry Breitkreuz, Yorkton--Melville | 36 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 3 | Ref | Val Meredith, Surrey-White Rock-South Langley | 19 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 4 | Ref | Jay Hill, Prince George-Peace River | 18 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | Ref | Lee Morrison, Swift Current-Maple Creek-Assiniboia | 11 | Against Bill C-68. |
| NOTE: 46 Reform party MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |

| Table 67: Top Five MPs's Frequency 2002 *Hansard* on "Gun Control" | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No.** | **Party** | **MP Name, Region/Position** | **Freq.** | **Frame** |
| 1 | BQ | Odina Desrochers, Lotbinière—L'Érable | 2 | Searching for links to Groupaction scandal. |
| 2 | BQ | Réal Ménard, Hochelaga—Maisonneuve | 2 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | BQ | Antoine Dubé, Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière | 1 | Critical of Liberal government spending. |
| 4 | BQ | Gilles Duceppe, Laurier—Sainte-Marie | 1 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | BQ | Yvan Loubier, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot | 1 | Critical of Liberal government spending. |
| NOTE: 5 BQ MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | CA | Garry Breitkreuz, Yorkton--Melville | 12 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 2 | CA | Stephen Harper, Leader of the Opposition | 10 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 3 | CA | Grant Hill, Macleod | 3 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 4 | CA | Andy Burton, Skeena | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | CA | Bob Mills, Red Deer | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | CA | Charlie Penson, Peace River | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | CA | John Williams, St. Albert | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | CA | Monte Solberg, Medicine Hat | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | CA | Vic Toews, Provencher | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| NOTE: 20 Canadian Alliance MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Lib | Martin Cauchon, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada | 29 | Pro gun control. |
| 2 | Lib | David Collenette, Minister of Transport | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | Lib | Paul Harold Macklin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada | 4 | Pro gun control. |
| 4 | Lib | Geoff Regan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons | 2 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 11 Liberal MPs are listed in this sample in total, only 2 are backbenchers. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | NDP | Libby Davies, Vancouver East | 2 | Pro gun control. |
| 2 | NDP | Alexa McDonough, Halifax | 1 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | NDP | Bill Blaikie, Winnipeg—Transcona | 1 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 3 NDP MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | PCs | Peter MacKay, Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough | 9 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 2 | PCs | Joe Clark, Calgary Centre | 3 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 3 | PCs | Gerald Keddy, South Shore | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 4 | PCs | Rick Borotsik, Brandon—Souris | 2 | Against Bill C-68. |
| NOTE: 6 PC MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |

| Table 68: Top Five MPs's Frequency 2006-2008 *Hansard* on "Gun Control" | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No.** | **Party** | **MP Name, Region/Position** | **Freq.** | **Frame** |
| 1 | BQ | Serge Ménard, Marc-Aurèle-Fortin | 70 | Pro gun control. |
| 2 | BQ | Benoît Sauvageau, Repentigny | 16 | Worked on the Public Accounts Committee. |
| 3 | BQ | Richard Nadeau, Gatineau | 10 | Pro gun control. |
| 4 | BQ | Jean-Yves Laforest, Saint-Maurice--Champlain | 9 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | BQ | Gilles Duceppe, Laurier--Sainte-Marie | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | BQ | Carole Freeman, Châteauguay--Saint-Constant | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | BQ | Réal Ménard, Hochelaga | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 22 MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | CPC | Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety | 128 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 2 | CPC | Brian Fitzpatrick, Prince Albert | 83 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 3 | CPC | John Williams, Edmonton--St. Albert | 76 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 4 | CPC | Garry Breitkreuz, Yorkton--Melville | 39 | Against Bill C-68. |
| 5 | CPC | Mike Lake, Edmonton--Mill Woods--Beaumont | 23 | Against Bill C-68. |
| NOTE: 59 MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Lib | Yasmin Ratansi, Don Valley East | 34 | Pro gun control. |
| 2 | Lib | Marlene Jennings, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce--Lachine | 27 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | Lib | Shawn Murphy, Charlottetown | 22 | Pro gun control. |
| 4 | Lib | Navdeep Bains, Mississauga-Brampton South | 18 | Pro gun control. |
| 5 | Lib | Roy Cullen, Etobicoke North | 17 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 39 MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | NDP | Joe Comartin, Windsor--Tecumseh | 56 | Pro gun control. |
| 2 | NDP | David Christopherson, Hamilton Centre | 17 | Pro gun control. |
| 3 | NDP | Paul Dewar, Ottawa Centre | 10 | Pro gun control. |
| 4 | NDP | Dennis Bevington, Western Arctic | 7 | Against the long gun registry. |
| 5 | NDP | Olivia Chow, Trinity--Spadina | 7 | Pro gun control. |
| NOTE: 11 MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |

The repetitive frames posted by each MP and party were identified quickly in the database based on the frequencies in each table. For example, Yasmin Ratansi, a Toronto MP, who spoke 34 times on the topic of gun control from 2006-2008 as recorded in *Hansard*, could be found to consistently state things like: "The gun registry works" (*Hansard*, 5.10.06: 39:1). Four times she referred to the Canadian Chiefs of Police Association's support for the registry to defend it. In this way, her positive frame of "public safety" as a "pro gun control" advocate can be established as consistent during this period of time.

From the table summaries above, an immediate question arises: Why did a backbench MP like Garry Breitkreuz of the Reform party in 1995 come to play such an influential and dominant role in the House debates on gun control during all three periods?

Breitkreuz was among the top five partisan speakers for the issue in these three time periods; as late as 2008, he was the fourth highest among 59 Tories who spoke on the issue, even though by that time he had become the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, still a backbencher without caucus status, but with more party responsibility. As of 2006, Breitkreuz stated that his sole purpose in seeking re-election (as posted on his personal website) was: "Bill C-68 Still Isn't Repealed, so I'm Running for my 6th Term!" (2006, November 25). In the past, Breitkreuz had been at various times Conservative party Deputy House Leader, Deputy House Leader of the Opposition (Reform party), Deputy Whip of the Official Opposition (Reform party), and Chief Opposition Whip (Reform party). Since 2006, he had frequently claimed, "There's no evidence that with the registry we've saved any lives" (House debate: July 11, 2006), and this had been his common frame for denouncing the registry along with the costs since his transition from the backbench, to a critic, and then to Chair of the Security Committee.

Since 2006, media reports had suggested that Breitkreuz's voice had been stifled by the notorious communications machine within the PMO—the same machine that had severed ties with the national media during several widely reported occasions since the Harper Conservatives came to power. For instance, Tim Naumetz of *The Ottawa Citizen* reported that the PMO had silenced Breitkreuz on the gun registry issue until it could

"decide how to deal with a promise to scrap the costly registry" (Naumetz, 2006). Naumetz demonstrated that Breitkreuz was deflecting "e-mails and letters to Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day and Justice Minister Vic Toews," and he found corroborating stories of this account, including one from the managing editor of *Outdoor Canada* magazine, "who also confirmed Mr. Breitkreuz's office denied an interview request this week after being denied permission by both the PMO and Mr. Day's office."

Such actions demonstrate Breitkreuz's submission to the party leaders on the issue that he once championed. His drop in *Hansard* mentions in the 2006-2008 period compared to previous periods also supports such a reading. Twenty-nine (29) of his 39 indexed mentions in *Hansard* on this topic came as the Chair of the Security Committee, which might have limited the extent to which he could comment on the topic without presenting outright bias as a chair.

Dennis Young, Breitkreuz's assistant, posted a response to *The Ottawa Citizen* story on Breitkreuz's website, stating "His fight to implement the party's firearms and property rights policies continues as always but most of his work is now done behind closed doors with his Conservative colleages [sic] in caucus and by talking directly to Ministers, the Prime Minister and their political staff" (2006). Notably, Candice Hoeppner was not elected to represent the Conservatives in the riding of Portage—Lisgar until 2008, so her PMB that takes up Breitkreuz's work was reframed and repackaged for both male and female pro gun voters once she was elected.

4. Which advocacy groups are named in *Hansard* by each party?

Advocacy groups like Canada's Coalition for Gun Control and the NRA played a dominant role in battles over the gun registry legislation, and an analysis of their representation in *Hansard* can help to understand which key actors and issue networks were mobilized by each party in support of it at key junctures. The words listed in Table 69 have been searched for in *Hansard* exactly as they are typed. The words were selected based on the most common advocacy groups identified during the descriptive review. Table 69 is provided solely to demonstrate the ease by which the sample can generate powerful data to demonstrate which parties mobilized specific actors in their frames.

**Table 69: Interest Groups and Keywords by Party Mention**

| | 1995 | | | | | 2002 | | | | | 2006-2008 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BQ | Lib | NDP | PC | Ref | BQ | CA | Lib | NDP | PC | BQ | CPC | Lib | NDP |
| Aboriginal(s) | 0 | 121 | 5 | 0 | 39 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Boondoggle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Garry Breitkreuz | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| First Nations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Coalition for Gun Control | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Hunter(s) | 2 | 67 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 47 | 12 | 2 |
| "Law abiding" gun owners | 0 | 43 | 1 | 0 | 134 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 52 | 5 | 1 |
| MP, Yorkton-Melville | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 0 |
| Police | 7 | 152 | 9 | 0 | 182 | 0 | 29 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 72 | 327 | 251 | 34 |
| "Public Health" and "Hospital(s)" Groups | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| RCMP | 0 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 76 | 20 | 4 |
| Women | 26 | 70 | 17 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 42 | 46 | 27 | 16 |

**NOTE:** Coefficients can be calculated by dividing the figures above by the total sample values in Table 65.
RED = the most frequent use of a term by a party in each of the three time periods
BLUE = more than 1 use.
* Words must be put into lower case formations using HyperPo to find instances (e.g.) "rcmp".

Breitkreuz's name does not appear in *Hansard*, which follows the practice of not mentioning an MP by their name in the House, and instead only their riding or position is

used. Using words as "issue units," it can be seen how readily particular actors or groups are used and mobilized for agenda setting at different periods in the *Hansard* debate. From these raw quantities, researchers can dive into the text to interpret how each party has used particular actors to support their cases in the House. The analysis in Section IV below focuses on the term "Boondoggle" as a key issue unit that appeared in Table 69. The term first appeared in the sample in 2002, and an investigation of who used the term and how it affected the case for gun control is required to better understand the myth behind it – in particular, the term is connected to the backbench MPs that supported Breitkreuz's analysis of the registry costs when it is found in the sample database.

5. Feeding Myths: Overall, what happened in the Parliament on "gun control," "The Firearms Act," and now "the long gun registry" during these three periods?

During the 2010 partisan campaigns to scrap or save the gun registry, several organizations attempted to educate the Canadian public through the media about the importance of the registry. Four national police organizations joined forces and released a top "10 myths" list about disinformation being circulated on the registry (see Table 70 below). The police groups that were in support of the federal gun registry included the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Police Association, Canadian Association of Police Boards, and Canadian Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2010). They were also supported by many other concerned medical, legal, and women's organizations; previous research demonstrates that such organizations are consistently the most influential groups of the pro-gun control issue network (Devereaux, Cukier, Ryan & Thomlinson, 2009).

| Table 70: Ten Myths About the Canadian Firearms Registry | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Myth** | **Fact** | **Media Frames** |
| The Firearms Registry is a financial boondoggle & costs billions to run. | In 2009, it cost $4.1 million to operate the long gun registry. | "Boondoggle" |
| There's too much red tape in registering a long gun. | Registrations or transfers are done over the phone or online in a matter of minutes. | "Red Tape" |
| It's expensive to register/transfer a long gun. | It's free. | "Expensive" |
| The gun registry targets the wrong people. | As of 2009, 111,533 firearms were seized by police for public safety reasons or after criminal use. 87, 893 were long guns. | "Public safety" |
| Criminals use handguns. Long guns are used by law-abiding hunters and farmers. | Not always. Of the 16 police officer shooting deaths since 1998, 14 were committed with a long gun. In 2007, about 15% of known firearm homicides in Canada were committed with a long gun. | "Law-abiding" citizens |
| Police don't support the CFP. | All of the major Canadian organizations representing police support the registration of all firearms in Canada. | "Police support" |
| Police don't use the gun registry or the CFP's other services. | Police across Canada access the Firearms Registry online on average 11,076 times a day, 2,842 of those queries for addresses involving community safety incidents. | "Registry access" |
| The Firearms Registry online has no impact on Police. | It does impact officer safety as evidenced by the fact that police used it 4,042,859 times last year. | "Officer safety" |
| The CFP does not save lives. | The CFP does more than register guns. It's another tool that assists police in making informed decisions that contribute to community safety. | "Police tool" |
| The "gun registry" database has been breached over 300 times by hackers - our information isn't safe. | Wrong. The CFP's national database has never been breached by hackers. Information is safe and secure. | "Hackers" |
| **Source:** Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Police Association, and Canadian Association of Police Boards. (2010). Retrieved from http://truthsandmyths.ca/top-10-myths.html | | |

The following analysis uses these same 10 claims as representing key frames in the left's media campaign conducted by the political parties for control of the "gun" agenda. As in previous chapters, the media frames in Table 70 have been selected using issue network methodology that first identified key words that are then tracked in digital media coverage with their distribution analyzed to understand how the issues represent dominant political actors' views (see chapter one for more on these methods). These themes have been reduced to terms that represent common framing language used by

each party over the time of this study. The findings support rather powerfully the analysis above that each partisan frame developed over the selected periods at key junctures, and were mobilized by each party to support their respective frames (see Table 71).

**Table 71: Top 10 Myths Translated into Issue Frames**

| | 1995 | | | | | 2002 | | | | | 2006-2008 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | BQ | Lib | NDP | PC | Ref | BQ | CA | Lib | NDP | PC | BQ | CPC | Lib | NDP |
| Boondoggle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Red Tape | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Expensive | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 0 |
| "Public safety"* | 1 | 33 | 9 | 0 | 94 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 85 | 58 | 3 |
| "Law-abiding" citizens* | 0 | 43 | 1 | 0 | 134 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 52 | 5 | 1 |
| "Police" support* | 7 | 156 | 15 | 0 | 192 | 0 | 46 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 80 | 403 | 271 | 38 |
| Registry "access"* | 20 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| "Officer" safety | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 14 |
| Police "tool" | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 2 | 19 | 0 |
| Hackers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**NOTE:** Coefficients can be calculated by dividing the figures above by the total sample values in Table 65.
RED = the most frequent use of a term by a party in each of the three time periods
BLUE = more than 1 use.
* Designated frames are based on raw word frequencies only

Out of these top ten claims, each of the raw frequencies reported by the Reform party, Canadian Alliance, Conservatives were easily found to be negative uses to scrap the registry—the amount of red highlighted above demonstrates their mobilization of the negative frames. In particular, the findings demonstrate that the Reform party in 1995 was arguing that the registry would "not improve public safety" (21 times out of the 94 uses). They also discussed "access" to the registry negatively, in that people might be able to use the registry's information to find weapons to steal if the database was not secure or if access was granted inappropriately.

The top ten framing terms were not effectively used in the smaller sample period of 2002, when the debate focused on the Auditor General's report and the

“mismanagement” of funds. The Canadian Alliance’s “boondoggle” frame came up at this time (11 uses), and they argued that the money could have been used to put more officers on the street to stop crime, instead of spending money on the registry. These frames continued when the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservatives merged to make the Conservative party.

In analyzing *Hansard*, a few clear patterns of agenda-setting language changes within political cultures clearly emerged since 1995. This study identified the specific switch in Conservative frames from “a waste of money” to a “$2 billion boondoggle”—which were based on the remarks of a backbencher who rose to become the chief party critic, then relinquished the role to another backbencher in Candice Hoeppner in 2010. In the final 2006-2008 sample period, 17 indexed uses of the “$2 billion” figure were found linked with the gun registry, which were made by 14 different Conservative MPs, including top party officials Jay Hill, the Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip; Lawrence Cannon, the then Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (who lost his seat in the 2011 election); and Tom Lukiwski, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform.

Overall, the analysis above shows Breitkreuz was among the main, consistent opposition actors driving change in the “gun control” policy, starting in 1995 from the backbench. The evidence was established by simply linking the words with the actor who spoke the terms most frequently in *Hansard*. Eventually, his anti-registry framing language gained traction in 2002, and the Canadian Alliance party élite built on his critic work as many other backbench MPs began to use the “$2 billion boondoggle” term.

In this case, *Hansard* presents the first instance of the "$2 billion" figure on December 3, 2002, coming directly from Breitkreuz in the following statement: "How much is the government willing to pour down the drain before it admits this is a failure, $1 billion more, $2 billion more, or $3 billion more? What will it be?" (*Hansard*, 3.12.02: 14:20). Knowing this date, a search was then conducted in other media for how the "$2 billion boondoggle" would become a dominant frame for the Conservative party until the present day, and the investigation served up an early 2003 Library of Parliament report that Breitkreuz requested and would use as "research" to continue circulating the "$2 billion" figure as a fact in the House and the media.

## IV. The "$2 Billion" Boondoggle Agenda-Setting Frame

The following analysis demonstrates in detail how the "$2 billion boondoggle" catch phrase was strategically created by Garry Breitkreuz's actions as agenda-setting language to frame debate in the media around the national gun registry after Sheila Fraser released her audit on December 4, 2002. The phrase "$2 billion" figure is directly identified as starting with Garry Breitkreuz, specifically because of his strategic use of a report he requested from the Library of Parliament during the 2002 yearend holiday period when the Liberal party was not answering the key questions of registry costs.[24] This report, written by Anthony G. Jackson, is entitled *Estimates of Some Costs of Enforcing the Firearms Act*, and it can still be found in the Parliamentary Research Bureau, Library of Parliament, Ottawa (Jackson, 2003).

In the report, Breitkreuz included an extra $1 billion estimate based on 500 000

[24] Garry Breitkreuz did not dispute this claim in a personal interview in 2010 (Linke, 2009). He instead stated, "the study's authors are 'disingenuous' for 'quibbling over $1 billion or $2 billion."

convictions caused by the Firearm Registry, added to the Auditor's report (Linke, 2009). The report's first page includes a letter from Jackson to Breitkreuz that states:

> Further to your request, enclosed is a paper entitled *Preliminary Estimates of Some Costs of Enforcing the Firearms Act*. The paper uses standard cost allocation methods to estimate the police, court and corrections services. This method is very similar to the exercise that your Assistant Mr. Young suggested in his e-mail of 4 March. As always caution should be exercised when estimating something by the average of a wider group. It is never known how close the item of interest is to the mean. This final version differs from the preliminary results I discussed with Mr. Young by the addition of non-*Criminal Code Firearms Act* offences and a related new cost scenario. (Jackson, 2003)

Breitkreuz did not heed the estimate warnings when he used the report, as the following analysis outlines. It must also be emphasized that he certainly did not state that the report included the "non-*Criminal Code Firearms Act* offences" when sharing information from the report after its release.

Along with this report, Breitkreuz used a March 25, 2003 *Calgary Herald* article for support of his case. The article upon closer scrutiny establishes a partisan link in creating the "$2 billion" frame because it cited a separate cost report of the registry created by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, a conservative Alberta/Saskatchewan-based interest group formerly headed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and fellow Conservative party MP Jason Kenney. Kenney, who spoke in the House 16 times on gun control from 2006 to 2008, was previously the Federation's CEO and he led in the newspaper story coverage on that report. Kenney is currently Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, and his most common frame for the gun issue follows the party line and not Breitkreuz's (with respect to the cost total). In his own words, Kenney's frame is based on taxpayer money:

> Mr. Speaker, I am sure that as taxpayers, Quebeckers – like all Canadians – do not want their money wasted. The firearms registry was a huge waste of money,

> a waste of over $1 billion dollars, according to the Auditor General. That is why the government will focus on fighting organized crime and gun related crime. This is why we will keep the handgun registry and increase prison terms for such crimes. (*Hansard*, 5.19.06)

In other words, Kenney's frame at the time was differed from Breitkreuz, but the Federation report helped Breitkreuz's fringe view.

The following sequence of events outlines in further detail how the "$2 billion boondoggle" came into existence from Breitkreuz's fabrication (i) in the House, (ii) in the media, and (iii) coordinated messages between the two.

**1) IN THE HOUSE:**

On March 24, 2003, Breitkreuz demanded to know the cost of the registry in the House of Commons. Martin Cauchon, Liberal Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Canada, assured him that everyone knew the costs were under $1 billion over ten years because of Fraser's audit, and he indicated that more information would be forthcoming on her work shortly.

**2) IN THE MEDIA:**

On March 25, 2003, a story appeared in *The Calgary Herald* stating that a Library of Parliament report estimated the registry would cost "$2 billion" (*The Calgary Herald*, 2003). The story stated:

> Canadian Alliance MP Garry Breitkreuz said Monday a Library of Parliament research paper suggests the cost of enforcing the Firearms Act could easily top $1 billion. That's on top of the estimated $1 billion the Auditor General has warned the registry could cost to implement within five years. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has released its own cost estimates for the troubled gun registry. It projects implementing the act alone could cost $2 billion by 2012. (*The Calgary Herald*, 2003)

There is no reference to Breitkreuz having requested the report in this article, nor is there any mention of the cautions that prefaced the report. Today, if a Web search is conducted, this report can only be found in three places, two of which are owned by Garry Breitkreuz and one by Simon Fraser University Professor Gary A. Mauser, a well-known opponent of gun control. Mauser cited the report in his 2007 Fraser Institute paper, "Hubris in North America" in order to justify his reference to the gun registry as a "$2 billion blunder."

Mauser's report was published well after Fraser's official reports had been released. Given that those reports by the Auditor General stated that the registry costs were officially under $1 billion, his analysis must be called into question in terms of its research merit to lie more on the side of advocacy. The outcome should not, however, cause undue surprise, given that both he and Breitkreuz have links to the US-based National Rifle Association of America (NRA)'s powerful gun lobby, facts which are often not reported when Mauser is described as an expert or criminologist in media accounts.

Neil Boyd, a professor of criminology at Simon Fraser University, wrote: "Mauser's unpublished study is best understood as a political intervention" (Boyd, 1995). Mauser is a former American gun collector, target shooter, and gun enthusiast who strongly endorses the right to bear arms as an important community initiative (Mauser, 2001). Mauser's 1988 study "Ownership of Firearms in British Columbia: Self Defense or Sportsmanship?" was partly funded by the NRA, which is stated at the beginning of the report.

Indeed, Mauser posed for a photograph (Figure 16) for the Canadian NRA website, but the photograph has been removed, presumably to influence partisan media framing. All of these examples fill in the range of framing rhetoric on the Conservative right.

**Figure 16: Professor Gary Mauser from the Canadian NRA Website (since removed)**

**Source:** Plawiuk, Eugene. (2007, June 12). "Gun Nutz." La Revue Gauche. Retrieved from http://plawiuk.blogspot.com/2007/06/gun-nutz.html

For instance, Breitkreuz is also on record as being an avid hunter which was his inspiration to go into politics to tackle the gun control issue, and he has "shared the stage with the president of the NRA" in the past (MP B. Stronach; *Hansard*, 11.26.06). Further, the gun lobby's support of the Conservative party is on record as totalling "$133 000" in the 2006 election (MP M. Jennings; *Hansard*, 9.18.06).

**3) IN THE HOUSE AND MEDIA (Coordinated Strategies):**

After the March 25, 2003 *Calgary Herald* article, the "$2 billion" price tag became a standard catch phrase in Parliament and in the media, continuing unabated to the present day. Before the article appeared, the phrases "$2 billion" and "gun registry" only appear in the news twice together: in two *Winnipeg Free Press* articles that appeared immediately after Sheila Fraser's first audit report was released on December 3, 2002.

Fraser's report cautioned that the registry cost might be close to $1 billion, but indicated that her audit needed to be completed to be certain of the costs. As well, she warned that the registry might cost near to $1 billion more in the next decade if left unchecked, and this is the closest to a $2 billion price tag ever mentioned in official reports. Despite the clarity of her report, the *Winnipeg Free Press* got it wrong… twice.

The first article, titled "Gun-law flaws 'tragic': Auditor fears lives at risk, says hiding costs from MPs 'inexcusable,'" appeared on December 4, 2002, and cited MP Garry Breitkreuz in formulating the first mention of the "$2 billion" price tag:

> Alliance MP Garry Breitkreuz called on the Liberals to pull the plug on the program.
>
> "How much is the government willing to pour down the drain before it admits this is a failure?" the Saskatchewan MP said. "One billion dollars more, $2 billion more, $3 billion more? What will it be?"

It must be noted that Breitkreuz's catch phrase "One billion dollars more, $2 billion more, $3 billion more? What will it be?" became a common Canadian Alliance refrain from that point onward.

The second *Winnipeg Free Press* article that got it wrong was an editorial entitled "Rock has squandered $2 billion," which appeared on December 7, 2002. This article did not cite any references for the "$2 billion" price tag, and simply criticized Rock and the registry stating, "when you add it all up, it comes close to a proudly defended $2 billion waste, the kind of credentials the Liberal left might look for in a leader."

In short, the above analysis provides the evidence that the "$2 billion boondoggle" language was strategically linked with the gun registry and created by Garry Breitkreuz and some peers to forward the anti-gun control agenda.

In Canadian media, the Factiva search engine revealed, from November 30, 1998, until June 12, 2002, only six stories linked the "gun registry" with the term "boondoggle" until the Fraser audit was tabled in Canada. In these articles, Breitkreuz was the voice of anti-gun control whenever a reference was needed, even for a *Washington Times* article, "American hunters fearful of anti-gun moves abroad" (2001). Not surprisingly, "boondoggle" is an American term that was taken up by the U.S. NRA to refer to gun control legislative initiatives in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Illinois according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2008).

After the audit was tabled, the *Globe and Mail* article "Kicked in the boondoggles" (2002) started off the use of the term that had taken off as the agenda-setting frame in the House (*Hansard*, 6.12.02). In House debates, "boondoggle" had only been used to refer to the HRDC scandal up until Fraser's audit. Immediately after the audit was released, "boondoggle" was used repeatedly in referring to the gun registry, and was also used by Conservative opposition members to describe anything else in the Liberals' mandate that had cost Canadians money, including the Sponsorship Program scandal, the GST not being cut despite an election promise, and being critical of research funded by the CIHR.

**Conclusion**

The use of  proxies and issue network methods demonstrated how agenda-setting language frames can be tracked to develop a better understanding of the range of rhetoric mobilized by the left and the right on wedge issues like the gun registry. The analysis demonstrated how the Conservative right's gun control frame evolved, and came to

circulate based on the actions of a few specific political actors, then was taken up in the party discourse in the House, and later in media as a standing fact that the registry had cost "$2 billion". The false claim of the "$2 billion" figure identified with this method above gives new credence to the adage "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend" from the Hollywood classic *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962).

The relevance and impact of the "$2 billion" frame cannot be dispelled easily in terms of framing the gun debate—would Canadians have reacted differently knowing the media fabrication, or having the costs interpreted as $1 billion over 10 years? Also, what does the figure still circulating in ever greater numbers say about media research and ethics? The study also demonstrated the complex agenda-setting dynamics between media and party members that arose based solely on the interpretative qualities of language, which the quantification of language would have missed on its own, but did in fact help direct and inform the research by indicating the origins of each partisan frame.

As of 2011, the partisan frames are rigidly locked into place as the Conservatives lead the charge to kill the long gun registry, while still advocating the maintenance the handgun registry. The precarious status of the previous minority governments did not stop the Conservatives from trying to scrap the long gun registry, with Bills C-301, S-5, and C-391 all emerging in early 2009. The opposition parties signalled united support for the registry when a resolution proposed by the Bloc Quebecois was approved with support from the Liberals and NDP. It restricted the government from extending the amnesty on gun control requirements set to expire on May 16, 2009, and stated the government should maintain the registration of all types of firearms in its entirety (Vongdouangchanh, 2009).

This resolve was eroded by the time the bill came to second reading, when 6 Liberals and 12 NDP members voted with the Conservatives to pass the bill. On September 22, 2010, Candice Hoeppner's PMB was defeated by the narrowest of margins, with the prime minister reiterating his commitment to dismantle the registry. From this analysis, the use of PMBs demonstrated how controversial issues and their framing can be used as wedge issues to challenge the opposition parties through the work of backbench MPs to test the issue frame as a trial balloon, before the party élite champion the issue.

In spite of the fact that the PMB was an expression of Government policy as outlined in the Speech from the Throne as well as numerous statements by the Prime Minister, it provided a convenient way to erode party solidarity and give the Opposition "cover" for not imposing party discipline to allow MPs to vote as they will or, as cynics might suggest, to be all things to all people. The process, however, undermines some of the principles of parliamentary democracy and made individual MPs far more vulnerable to American style lobbying campaigns based on the urban/rural split in the 2011 election.

It is difficult to assess without accurate polling whether the use of gun control as a wedge issue was completely successful for the Conservatives as an agenda-setting tool. No doubt the Conservatives gained their majority in 2011, and five of the eight Liberals who changed their votes on the issue lost their seats to Conservatives (i.e. Larry Bagnell lost to Conservative Ryan Leef; Albina Guarnieri retired and new Liberal candidate Peter Fonseca lost to Conservative Wladyslaw Lizon; Anthony Rota lost to Conservative Jay Aspin; Todd Russell lost to Conservative Peter Penashue; and Jean-Claude D'Amours lost to Conservative Bernard Valcourt). It is unclear if their voting records on the registry

were the sole causes of their losses or if it was the larger sea change in Canadian politics. Notably, none of the NDP MPs who changed their vote lost their seats. Given the 2011 election results, the registry will most certainly face another vote in 2012 under the newly elected Conservative majority unless legal challenges are made or popular support rises in Canada to halt any further actions.

## Chapter Nine
## Agenda Setting in Action: The Anti-Coalition Offensive

The study of the Conservatives' anti-Coalition Government stance is important in order to understand how a governing political party changed the rules of the minority government playbook in dealing with potential non-confidence votes by using framing, along with prorogation, not once, but *twice* to avoid potentially damaging situations. The first use of prorogation came on December 4, 2008, in response to the possible Liberal-led coalition that threatened a vote of non-confidence nine days after the new parliamentary session began. The second request for prorogation occurred on December 30, 2009, which Prime Minister Harper stated was to allow all Canadians to enjoy the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics without politics affecting the games, but opposition critics argued the move was really to avoid the increasing scrutiny of the government's possible knowledge of Afghan detainee abuses, where Canadian forces had allegedly turned war prisoners over to Afghan forces for enhanced interrogation and torture, violating international human rights.

In both prorogation situations, the Conservatives came back stronger in the polls, and eventually won a majority government in 2011. How was this feat possible during the volatile minority government period?

Why did the Liberal-led "Coalition Government" option not continue after the 2008 holiday season prorogation? What messages were sent from each party to frame the Coalition Government issue in minds of the Canadian electorate that had little or no firsthand experience with that form of government?

The argument presented in this chapter is that the Conservative government consistently and successfully framed the Coalition Government as "undemocratic", and

Canadians were convinced by this frame, very similarly to how the public supported King's framing of Byng's decision to support Meighen's minority government as an imperialist power grab in 1925 (see chapter three). The main differences between the King-Byng affair and Harper's anti-coalition offensive would be that King was a Liberal framing the Progressive Conservative Meighen as a British loyalist, while Harper was Conservative framing the Liberal Dion as selling Canada to "Separatists and Socialists" (see numerous entries in *Hansard*, or the analysis below). The Conservatives created one single label in the "Separatist-Socialist Coalition" to create distrust of the Coalition Government in Canadian's minds, while the other parties fought among themselves to create a frame that would not be viewed as a power grab, which ultimately failed, despite many Canadians recognizing that the Coalition Government was entirely democratic and politically feasible in the parliamentary tradition.

The Conservatives also used attack ads successfully to weaken the opposition leader in the lead up to the 2008 election, and continued to link leadership and the Coalition Government issue during the first prorogation period. By 2011, the attack strategy decimated two Liberal leaders' fortunes through framing Dion as a lame duck leader and Ignatieff as a self-interested elitist. Like the gun issue (in chapter eight), this approach simultaneously shored up the Conservative base, and divided the coalition partners' attempts to gain enough support in the House to take control over the Conservative agenda.

This chapter first provides a history of Coalition Governments in Canada to understand it as a politically viable option within the Canadian and Westminster parliamentary traditions. The word frequencies in the indexed federal *Hansard* for

"Coalition Government" are then analyzed to identify and understand what rhetorical frames were mobilized by political actors on each side of the debate from 2008-2011. This analysis is conducted to fill in the missing pieces for how the Conservative government set their agenda and maintained power during this volatile period.

To that end, the following questions are answered using the same methods of textual analysis as the previous chapter:

1. Which parties had the most MPs speak on the issue?
2. Which parties spoke the most words on the issue?
3. Which MPs spoke the most frequently on the issue?
4. What other issues were linked to the "Coalition Government" offensive?
5. Overall, what happened in the Parliament every day on the "Coalition Government" issue?

The sample period for these questions was the three parliamentary sessions from the 2008 election ending with the 2011 election: (i) Session I: November 18th, 2008 - December 4th, 2008 (143 indexed entries); (ii) Session II: January 26th, 2009 – December 30th, 2009 (44 indexed entries); and (iii) Session III: March 3rd, 2010 – March 26th, 2011 (75 indexed entries).

By following the rhetoric, researchers can better understand the Conservative government's strategies that worked to maintain their power at the expense of their opponents. Once again, the anti-Coalition Government frames were consistent with the overall strategies of the Conservative government's "strict parent" rhetoric, as were the Liberals' and NDP's "nurturing parent" frames that were identified in the previous chapters. The interesting result, from using the textual analysis method to understand the agenda-setting frames at play for the Coalition Government issue, was the unanimous

partisan support for the pro/anti frames. The consistent party frames made it a much easier issue to follow in terms of its history, as compared to the controversial gun registry, where disagreement existed within the Liberal and NDP parties based on regional support.

**I. The Problem: How did Coalition Government Become Feared by Canadians?**

Canada's history since Confederation in 1867 has not included any official Coalition Governments federally. During the First World War, Conservative Robert Borden attempted to form a coalition to support the controversial conscription policy, but the Liberals refused because many French Canadians did not wish to fight a British war. Instead 14 Anglophone Liberal-Unionist party members crossed the floor, swinging electoral power to the Conservatives, along with some independents and Liberals who called themselves Unionists (not "Liberal-Unionists"). Borden's Cabinet included 12 Conservatives and nine members from the latter group.

By definition, a coalition involves a formal agreement between two or more of the political parties to form a government when no single party holds a majority in the legislature, and using this definition, there have been no modern Canadian examples of a Coalition Government.

As Russell defined it, a Coalition Government occurs when a large party has a "plurality in the legislature but not a majority" (Russell, 2008, p. 7). In this event, the party gains a majority by offering cabinet seats or some form of alliance to another smaller party (or parties). The Borden government is sometimes falsely called a "Coalition Government", but is more aptly called the "Union Government" formed from

Liberal MPs splitting from their party, with Liberal leader Wilfrid Laurier continuing to lead the anti-conscription vote Liberals (Fern and Ostry, 1976, pp. 229-241). Of the 235 seats in the House, the Liberals held 82 seats after the December 17, 1917 election against the Borden-led Union party, 62 of those seats were from Quebec. The Union government lasted until the end of the war, and broke up when the first King minority came to power in the 1921 election (Canada's first minority government).

The "Great Coalition" was the last official coalition in pre-confederation Canada. It was formed between Upper Canada (now Ontario) and Lower Canada (now Quebec) in 1864. The coalition formed because of the political deadlock achieved by the double majority required to pass legislation at the time. The "Great Coalition" led to the three conferences in Charlottetown, Quebec, and London that paved the way for Canadian Confederation in 1867. The Great Coalition is, therefore, viewed as one of the most successful coalitions ever, while in comparison the just prior pre-confederation coalition lasted only three months because of the double majority deadlock still being in place as a national policy designed to limit the differences between French and English Canada. In comparison to the success of the Great Coalition, Borden's attempt at a coalition was viewed bitterly in Quebec and led to years of Conservative contempt in the province.

In 2008, the potential impact of the Liberal-led Coalition Government agreement was difficult to predict given the lack of modern Canadian historical precedents. The October 14, 2008 election led to the second Harper Conservative minority government, the third minority government in six years. The Conservatives seat count increased to 143 from 127, and the Stéphane Dion led Liberals returned with 77 seats, down by 26 seats from their previous 103. The NDP increased their seat count to 37 from 29, and the Bloc

Quebecois lost 2 seats ending up with 49. Parliament was at its most unstable point since the collapse of the Liberal dynasty under Chrétien, with 62.35 % of Canadians not having voted for the ruling party, up from 58.19% in the 2006 election despite the Conservatives increase in seats.

The Conservatives framed their win as having gained an increase in support for their mandate from Canadians. The opposition parties stated that Canadians returned a minority government so the parties would have to work together, and the opposition argued their roles were to hold the ruling Conservatives to account representing the interests of Canadians who did not vote for a Conservative majority.

The conditions were set for the coalition crisis when the Harper Conservatives tabled a fiscal update on November 27, 2008. The update was required because of amendments to the stimulus-spending budget in the previous parliament, which the opposition had rallied to enforce in order to limit the Conservatives' power while dealing with the impacts of the global recession. The Conservatives' fiscal update included provisions to cut government spending, suspended civil servants' rights to strike, and eliminated political party election subsidies, which the Conservatives argued were pertinent austerity measures during the global recession. They also argued they were attempting to follow through on their policies which voters supported through the election results, and that could not be put through in their previous minority government.

The Bloc, Liberals, and NDP stated they could not support the controversial inclusions in the fiscal update, arguing that the election subsidies improved the democratic process in Canada and that cutting government spending too quickly would have a detrimental effect on the economy. In response to the Conservatives' perceived

antagonism, the opposition parties reached an agreement to create a minority Coalition Government. They argued they could form a more stable government than Harper's tactics of constantly daring the opposition to force another election if they disagreed with any new Conservative-led legislation. In the agreement, the Liberal-NDP coalition would have been supported by the Bloc for a period of 18 months, and they intended to forward a non-confidence motion against the fiscal update on December 1, 2008.

Prime Minister Harper delayed the vote, and went to Governor General Michaëlle Jean on December 4, 2008, to request that parliament be prorogued. The prorogation would put an end to the current parliamentary session, ending all bills under consideration, and allow parliament to return fresh with time to avert a possible national crisis.

Jean consulted with political scientists such as Peter Russell, among other parliamentary specialists, to understand the potential impacts of the decision (Gray, 2012). She agreed to the prorogation on the condition that parliament would begin early in the New Year, and the date was set for January 26, 2009. Harper thereby avoided the confidence motion, and by the time parliament resumed, the Liberals had agreed to support the new Conservative budget that was tabled on January 27, 2009, mainly because of the diminishing popular support for the coalition and the Liberal party.

Polls at the time demonstrated that there was wide disagreement among Canadians as to the merits of a possible Coalition Government. On December 3, 2008, an Angus Reid poll of 1,012 Canadian adults stated:

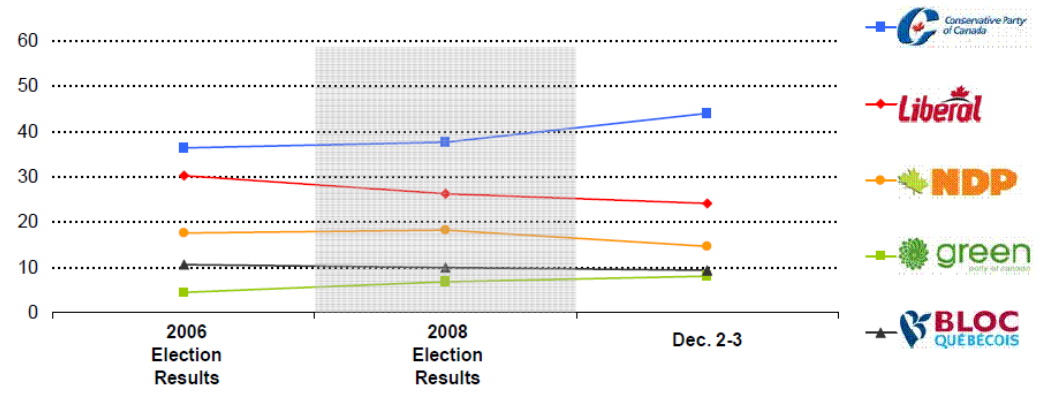
> 40 per cent of respondents believe the Conservatives do not deserve to continue in office, while 35 per cent believe they do. […] 36 per cent of respondents believe the opposition parties should get together and topple the Conservative minority government, while 41 per cent disagree with this rationale. When asked

> about a solution in the event the Tories are defeated in the House of Commons, 37 per cent of respondents would allow the opposition to form a coalition government, while 32 per cent would hold a new federal election. (Angus Reid, 2008)

On December 4, 2008, a CBC / EKOS poll of 2536 Canadians stated that 47% believed a Stephen Harper led government would better be able to lead Canada out of the current economic crisis, with 34% supported a Dion-led coalition (EKOS, 2008).

The same poll demonstrated support for the Conservatives had increased to 44.0% from 36.27% in the 2008 election. The Liberals support had dropped to 24.1% from the election's 26.26%. Table 72 below demonstrates the Liberals' decline in support from the 2006 election.

**Table 72: December 2008 Voter Intentions Compared to Election Results**




**Source:** (EKOS, 2008)

Table 72 also illustrates declines in support for the NDP and the Bloc after the news of the Coalition Government agreement.

At the time, parliamentary experts and each political party delivered arguments for and against Coalition Government. Some scholars argued Coalition Government could allow for an increase in representative democracy, similar to proportional representation systems of government, because more of the electorate was represented by their elected officials (Russell, 2008; 2010). Others viewed Coalition Government as

unstable and only able to achieve very specific agreed to agendas, like Borden's Union government, or similar to the Liberal/NDP partnerships during minority governments in Canada.

In executive leadership studies, Helms's (2005) research on the comparative analysis of executive leadership styles and cabinet-building processes described Coalition Government building in Britain and Germany (no Canadian examples were given). German chancellors had generally formed coalition governments with one other party, which limited their choice of cabinet ministers in some respects, but not as much as in Finland or Belgium where coalition governments made up of four or more parties is common. German chancellors, unlike British prime ministers, have the ability to choose cabinet ministers from outside of parliament: "81.8 per cent of German cabinet ministers and 99.6 per cent of their British counterparts during the period 1945/9-2000 – held a seat in the Bundestag or the House of Commons" (Helms, 2005, p. 229).

In comparison to Germany, Helms argued that British cabinets were heavily constrained by the shadow cabinets of opposition/coalition partners, which would be similar to Canada's pre-confederation experiences with coalition governments because of the basis in the Westminster tradition. Canada however does not follow the British tradition of allowing the elected MPs to choose their party leaders. Moore (2011) argued that Canada's party systems where the party leaders are chosen by non-elected party membership holders during leadership conventions has a centralizing effect in Parliament, because MPs must tow the party line following the leader and cabinet's views on policy, knowing that those visible leaders were in many cases the reasons the backbenchers were elected.

Helms described Rudi Andeweg's spectrum of collegiality and collectivity for conceptually locating the functionality of coalition governments and their cabinets. Table 73 below depicts Andeweg's "Dimensions of Cabinet Government" (Helms, 2005, p. 233).

**Table 73: Dimensions of Cabinet Government**

| | **COLLECTIVITY** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Fragmented (individual minister)** | **Segmented (cabinet committee)** | **Collective (entire cabinet)** |
| **COLLEGIALITY** | | | |
| **Monocratic (prime ministerial)** | Most British and U.S. Administrations. | Dwight Eisenhower (U.S.). | |
| **Oligarchic (inner cabinet)** | | | |
| **Collegial (ministerial equality)** | | | Douglas-Home (Britain). Helmut Kohl (Germany). |

**Source:** (Helms, 2005, p. 233). | **NOTE:** Not all types are represented in Helm's work.

Helms used this grid to assess how the British and German cabinet systems tended to cover up the weaknesses of the leader, while the U.S. system tended to uncover the weaknesses of the president if an administrative department leader succeeded outside of the president's mandate.

From the British and German examples, Helms stated, "the potential weaknesses of a prime minister may in fact be partly compensated by the strong performance of individual cabinet ministers or the cabinet as a whole may well transform into electoral support for the governing party or coalition of parties" (Helms, 2005, p. 237). He provided the comparison of European parliamentary democracies with the well-known loneliness of the American presidency to demonstrate how parliamentary cabinets still provide coverage for prime ministers and more cabinet collectivity, even when a possible leadership contender might be sitting in the cabinet. This was the case in Helmut Kohl's

coalition governments, where several future German executive leaders worked with him, including the future chancellor Angela Merkel.

The "Dimensions of Cabinet Government" grid can be read into the Canadian minority government situation, where the Conservatives had been charged by the opposition as being monocratic (and therefore, very non-collegial). Similarly, each cabinet minister under Harper worked as an individual, reporting to the leader to demonstrate the party's successes, or taking the fall in some very specific cases (e.g. Rona Ambrose, Maxime Bernier, Helena Guergis, Bev Oda, and Lisa Raitt, who lost their portfolios or had their positions shifted due to negative press and public opinion). Using this comparative background, it is difficult to understand the current Conservative government's position that coalition governments are undemocratic. Many have noted that the Conservative party itself was originally a coalition of the former Progressive Conservative and Reform parties.

In 2011, Harland described how the lack of constitutional law concerning Governor General processes during Canada's Coalition Government crisis left the Harper Conservatives room to interpret the "conventions" widely. Only one political scientist, Tom Flanagan (Harper's former mentor), argued at the time that the Coalition Government was undemocratic; 39 other academics formed a group to counter Flanagan's statements, in support of the coalition's legitimacy (Harland, 2011, p. 27). Harland looked at similar cases of coalition governments in New Zealand and Britain, where Cabinet Convention Manuals had been created to explain the rules surrounding such conventions as coalition governments, election writs, the Governor General's privilege, and prorogation. New Zealand was the first to adopt such a manual in the late

1970s, and the UK in 2009, in preparation for the eventuality of a future hung parliament that occurred in 2010 (Harland, 2011, p. 29).

Harland found that such a manual would most likely not be produced in Canada given that in 2011 the Conservatives held a majority, and their last official statements concerning a Coalition Government were that they would never seek to take power after an election via a coalition option if they were in the opposition, because they argued that would go against the democratic election results representing the wishes of the Canadian people. Harper did clarify later in an interview with CBC flagship reporter Peter Mansbridge that if parties took the coalition option, they should be prepared to go back to the Canadian people in another election, which some might interpret as Harper agreeing it was a democratic possibility.

Harland's work missed discussing the Harper Conservatives' framing strategies of attacking the opposition leader's reputations, and dividing the opposition on the Coalition Government issue; he focused instead on the constitutional and cabinet conventions. He also missed providing any justification that Canadians in fact believed and supported the Flanagan/Harper argument that the formation of a Coalition Government without electoral support would be "undemocratic" (Harland, 2011, p. 27). The opinion polls could in fact have been a better reflection that Canadians simply did not want a Coalition Government during a global recession (not that it was undemocratic); there is no detailed evidence to demonstrate what in fact the vast majority of Canadians believed, and instead there is only evidence that the Liberals were losing popular support.

Given this background, the reason for Canadians' fears about Coalition Government must, therefore, come from somewhere else, other than from academics or

parliamentary experts, because most parliamentary experts agreed that not only are Coalition Government democratic, but they have existed in Canada's past, at the provincial level, and were functionally being used in many other Western democracies. What other rhetoric was circulating about Coalition Government prior to and during the 2008 prorogation that helped to engender Canadians' fears?

**II. Background: Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff**

Canadian elections are about who gets to lead and set the national agenda based on the support of the electorate. Was Prime Minister Harper correct to say that, if a Coalition Government was to form, the leader should be prepared to go back the Canadian people? Was his wording simply a sly way of daring the Stéphane Dion-led Liberals to attempt it, and Dion blinked in the final instance of the game of chicken?

Agenda-setting research can help us to answer these questions. Kingdon's *evolutionary* multiple streams model has been used throughout this dissertation to understand how framing language represents issues that evolve as they move through the problem, policy, and political streams (Kingdon, 1995). In contrast, the Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) *advocacy coalition framework* (ACF) model argued that policy actors join together based on shared information, common interests, and knowledge of a problem in pursuing proposed solutions (see chapter one for more on these models). In the ACF model, each coalition's policy success was influenced by the alternatives they created by joining together their group's resources and their abilities to adapt policy to external changes, but the pressure from outside groups also influenced and refined the coalition's end products. Thinking through this latter model can be complimentary to the

Kingdon evolutionary model, because the ACF model adds complexity to the internal workings of groups, which have been represented in the rhetorical strategies that have been identified throughout this research project demonstrating Kingdon's model.

The ACF model can in fact help us to understand how each political party is a coalition of political actors, like the Conservative party being a combination of the members of the former Progressive Conservative and Reform parties. Or, the Liberals being a combination of centre-left and centre-right actors, who roughly agree to focus on the rights of individuals in free markets, rather than join small government Conservatives or Social Conservatives on the right. Thinking through the ACF model allows researchers to ask questions like, "How do people mobilize, maintain, and act in advocacy coalitions? To what extent do people learn, especially from allies and from opponents? What is the role of scientists and scientific and technical information in policymaking? What factors influence both minor and major policy change?" (Weible, Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Henry & deLeon, 2011, p. 349). Where Kingdon's model attempts to understand the motivation of policy changes broadly over time, the ACF model can instead be used to fulfill the need for a more complex understanding of party subsystems, including both researchers and intergovernmental relations in the process over longer-term time perspectives. I offer the ACF model here simply as an alternative way for understanding the mobilization of anti-Coalition Government frames by the Conservatives.

Table 74 presents the two consistent sets of partisan frames that appeared between 2008-2011 on the topic of "Coalition Government". The two sets of frames are labeled as

the “Conservative” frame and the “Coalition” frame to represent the anti and pro sides of the argument respectively.

| **Table 74: Summary of the “Coalition Government” Frames in 2008** | |
|---|---|
| **Conservative Frame (Anti-Coalition)** | **Coalition Frame (Pro)** |
| - the Coalition Government was made up of separatists and socialists<br>- the Coalition Government was a power grab and undemocratic<br>- the Coalition Government was a coup d’etat against the democratically elected Conservative government<br>- the Coalition Government was going against the 2008 election vote that gave power to the Conservatives<br>- the Coalition Government would destabilize Canada during the recession and hurt the economy<br>- the Conservatives denied any support for Coalition Governments in the past (even with the evidence of a letter signed by Stephen Harper) | - the Harper Conservatives had lost the confidence of the House<br>- the Conservatives were not working with the other parties as they stated they would, given the third consecutive minority government election result<br>- the Conservatives were not working for the 62.35% of Canadians who didn’t vote for a Conservative candidate in the 2008 election<br>- the Conservative party was a broken Reform party coalition and had become too ideological to govern<br>- the Conservatives were saying the Separatists were selling out to Canada (in Quebec), and the Liberals were selling out to Separatists (to the ROC) simply to foster social unrest<br>- the Conservatives were prepared to form their own Coalition Government with Separatists in 2004, if the option arose |

These two frames will be used to better understand how the Conservatives mobilized their message in the House from 2008-2011, at the expense of the opposition’s fragmented rebuttals and attempts to educate Canadians about the democratic possibilities of a Coalition Government. Overall, after the first prorogation, it is noticeable in *Hansard* that the Conservatives kept the coalition parties divided on key issues, and a return to the initial frames in Table 74 above did not occur.

Two Liberal leaders served as the Leader of the Opposition during the 40th parliament. It is important to note the Conservative rhetoric that framed their respective

leaderships during this period to understand how 47% of Canadians believed a Stephen Harper led government would better be able to lead Canada out of the global and national economic crisis, while only 34% supported a Dion-led coalition. During the 2008 election run, Conservative attack ads famously framed Dion as “not a leader” and “not worth the risk”, mainly attacking the costs of his Green Shift platform (see Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Conservative Election Attack Ads for Stéphane Dion**

| | |
|---|---|
|   |   |
| **Source:** Conservative Party Ad. 2007. Youtube. Retrieved July, 2011, from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAtuvQFXeuc | **Source:** Conservative Party Ad. 2007. Youtube. Retrieved July, 2011, from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKqtpgdPINQ |

The second right-hand side “Not Worth the Risk” Conservative attack ad in Figure 17 above was pulled by the Conservatives because of the childish image of a puffin defecating on Dion’s shoulder. Canadian political ads had never fallen this low. Harper even apologized for the ad, stating that he did not approve it before it was released.

Ignatieff suffered a similar framing, beginning ten days after he became the official Liberal leader on May 2, 2009, well before the 2011 election. Figure 18 below presents the familiar frame of the Conservatives’ “Just Visiting” attack ads. These ads painted Ignatieff as an academic elitist who was parachuted into his Toronto riding simply for his own personal gain, after working outside of Canada for a number of years, and not to serve the interests of his fellow Canadians as a democratically elected

representative in the public service. Like Dion, Ignatieff's assets had quickly been framed by the Conservatives as a weakness.

**Figure 18: Conservative Election Attack Ad for Michael Ignatieff**


**Source:** Conservative Party Ad. 2007. Youtube. Retrieved July, 2011, from http://www.stephentaylor.ca/2009/05/conservative-party-ad-michael-ignatieff-just-visiting/

The Conservative frames for both Dion and Ignatieff worked, not simply as isolated attacks though, but as part of other coordinated offensives, like the anti-Coalition Government frames. The Conservatives worked to present the opposition leaders as less suitable to be prime minister, and beyond the leadership issue, the Conservatives used key policy issues to destabilize their opponents. The leadership attack campaign is best understood by comparing to the record of language representing all of the parties as it evolved in *Hansard* from 2008 to 2011 on the Coalition Government issue.

## III. Coalition Government in *Hansard* 2008-2011

Like the previous chapter, the automated word frequency counting methodology was employed to analyze the indexed *Hansard* entries of "coalition government" to document the top frames used by each part. In contrast to the previous chapter, *Hansard*

was also useful for a case where the frames were clearly entrenched very early in the debate. In the last chapter, disagreements existed among the Liberal and NDP party members, but in the Coalition Government case, each party set their frames early and mainly remained on point, with the exception of the Liberals during the second session, after the first prorogation (as was described above), where the Liberals began to support the Conservatives having been chastened by recent polling numbers. Examples of these changes will obviously be expected to appear in *Hansard* directly.

2. Which parties had the most MPs speak on the issue in each period?

Table 75 below lists the overall number of MPs who spoke on the topic of "Coalition Government" in each of the three sample periods taken from *Hansard*. The balance of power in each period is demonstrated in this table by listing the number of MPs who spoke alongside the total number of seats for each party in 2008.

**Table 75: Total Number of MPs Who Spoke by Party and Number of Seats**

| Party | Session I | Session II | Session III |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bloc Quebecois (BQ) | 7 / 49 | 4 / 49 | 4 / 49 |
| Conservatives (CP) | 38 / 143 | 13 / 143 | 28 / 143 |
| Liberals (LP) | 19 / 77 | 7 / 77 | 7 / 77 |
| NDP | 9 / 37 | 6 / 37 | 3 / 37 |

**NOTE:** The balance of power in each period is demonstrated in this table by listing the number of MPs who spoke alongside the seats for each party.

Table 75 demonstrates that Conservative MPs spoke on the topic the most frequently in each session. This fact may simply reflect their ruling party status, but the ruling party can sometimes chose to be silent on an issue (as was seen in the case of gun control in the previous chapter), so more information is required to understand this apparent trend.

3. Which parties spoke the most words on the issue?

Table 76 demonstrates again that the Conservatives spoke the most in terms of the amount of words for the first and last sessions, but even though they had the most MPs speak on the topic in the second session, they did not speak the most words. Table 76 presents that both the Bloc and the NDP were more vocal in terms of the words spoken on the topic in the shorter second session (that was cut off through prorogation again).

**Table 76: Total Number of Words Spoken by Party**

| Party | Session I | Session II | Session III |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bloc Quebecois (BQ) | 5783 | 2891 | 2044 |
| Conservatives (CP) | 12394 | 2596 | 10907 |
| Liberals (LP) | 4236 | 2873 | 2639 |
| NDP | 3906 | 4958 | 1572 |

**NOTE:** The balance of power in each period is demonstrated in this table by listing the number of MPs who spoke alongside the seats for each party.

An explanation for this anomaly in the data will become more evident by answering the remaining questions, but many may surmise that it was from their attacks on both the Conservatives and Liberals, who they began to frame as the new coalition when the Liberals began to prop up the Conservatives after they failed to see the Coalition Government agreement through.

4. Which MPs spoke the most frequently on the issue?

In the following Tables 77 to 79, the dominant players in each party can be noted as having spoken on the Coalition Government issue in *Hansard*. In the first session, all of the party leaders spoke in the House about the potential Coalition Government (see Table 77), with most of the entries coming in the first three days of December during the Economic Infrastructure Statement debates and Question Period. To note, the indexed

*Hansard* entries do not include the odd snipes, interjections, or additions that occurred frequently outside of House decorum during this period; these are the indexed entries selected by the public service in accordance with their best practices for creating a useful and searchable publication for the government and the Canadian public alike (as was described in the previous chapter).

Table 77 demonstrates that the Conservative MPs who spoke most on the topic of "Coalition Government" were the party elite (i.e. the prime minister and the cabinet). Indeed, each party's leader spoke on the important issue a number of times during this period.

**Table 77: Top MPs's Frequency in the First Parliamentary Session**

| No. | Party | MP Name, Region/Position | Freq. | Frame |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | BQ | Gilles Duceppe - Laurier—Sainte-Marie | 5 | For |
| 2 | BQ | Pierre Paquette - Joliette | 4 | For |
| 3 | BQ | Josée Beaudin - Saint-Lambert | 2 | For |
| NOTE: 7 BQ MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | CPC | Stephen Harper – Prime Minister | 11 | Against |
| 2 | CPC | Jim Flaherty – Minister of Finance | 7 | Against |
| 3 | CPC | Lawrence Cannon – Minister of Foreign Affairs | 6 | Against |
| 4 | CPC | Stockwell Day - Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway | 4 | Against |
| NOTE: 39 Conservative MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Lib | Stéphane Dion - Leader of the Opposition | 4 | For |
| 2 | Lib | Geoff Regan - Halifax West | 2 | For |
| 2 | Lib | Mario Silva - Davenport | 2 | For |
| NOTE: 20 Liberal MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | NDP | Charlie Angus - Timmins—James Bay | 5 | For |
| 1 | NDP | Jim Maloway - Elmwood—Transcona | 5 | For |
| 2 | NDP | Jack Layton - Toronto—Danforth | 4 | For |
| NOTE: 9 NDP MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |

The repetitive frames posted by each MP and party were identified quickly in the database from the information recorded in each table. For example, Stephen Harper's common "Separatist-Socialist Coalition" frame is represented in the following excerpts that all occurred between December 1 to 3, 2008:

1. **40-1: *Hansard* 10 - 12/1/08 14:25**: "Mr. Speaker, at that time, we had an agreement on an amendment to the Speech from the Throne. This is not an amendment of confidence. This party will never consider a coalition with the Bloc Québécois. It is astounding to see the party once led by Laurier and Trudeau applauding the leader of the Bloc."

2. **40-1: *Hansard* 11 - 12/2/08 14:38**: "Mr. Speaker, there are two very clear choices. The Canadian people made a choice to elect the Conservative Party to govern, without the support of the separatists. If the leader of the Liberal Party wants to become Prime Minister with the support of the separatists, he needs to put that option to the people of Canada."

3. **40-1: *Hansard* 12 - 12/3/08 14:48**: Mr. Speaker, the choice for the hon. member and for his party is very simple. If they really believe governing the country in a deal with the separatists is good for the country, then they should take that to the Canadian people and get a mandate for it or they should walk away from it and say it was a mistake.

From such excerpts, the pro/anti-coalition frames in Table 77 were easily categorized for each MP and party. In total, the Conservatives' anti-coalition frame was an onslaught of 12349 words from 39 MPs during the first three days of December; their output totalled nearly more than all three opposition parties combined on both metrics.

The three opposition parties clearly aligned together on the pro-coalition frame in the first session. For comparison, Dion's pro-coalition frame is demonstrated in the following excerpts:

1. **40-1: *Hansard* 11 - 12/2/08 14:38**: "Mr. Speaker, the one who is dividing Canadians more than anybody else is the Prime Minister, and I will show him that again. He is saying that the Liberals are selling Canada to the separatists. His Quebec MPs are saying that the separatists are selling their souls to the Liberals. He needs to choose between these two lies. Canadians are fed up with these lies."

2. **40-1: *Hansard* 11 - 12/2/08 14:39**: "Mr. Speaker, as a democrat, I know that when a government is elected as a minority government, it has the responsibility to behave accordingly. The Prime Minister has failed to address the economic crisis. He has failed. If he was a democrat, he would allow the House to show how much he failed."

The NDP pro-coalition frame is evident in this excerpt taken from Jack Layton:

> Mr. Speaker, 62% of people voted against giving this Prime Minister a mandate. They voted for opposition parties. Parties on this side of the House have set aside their differences to work together. The new coalition government's priority will be to put forward concrete solutions for the economy. That is what people want now. The Conservatives refused to do it, so how can Canadians have confidence in this government? (40-1: *Hansard* 11 - 12/2/08 14:33)

Similarly, the Bloc's pro-coalition frame is represented in Duceppe's statements:

> Instead of looking for red herrings, will the Prime Minister admit that a coalition was formed because he did not make the sort of compromises a minority government must make, that he bears sole responsibility for the political crisis and that he has lost the confidence of this House? (40-1: *Hansard* 11 - 12/2/08 14:26).

Duceppe led the Bloc in raising a unique 2004 historical point in the debate: Harper's commitment to the Bloc that he would request the Governor General explore all possible options if the Liberal minority did ever collapse; in other words, the Conservatives had supported a Coalition Government position in 2004. Duceppe waited until 2011 to produce the actual letter signed by Harper that stated this fact.

At the height of the debate, the Conservative Minister of Canadian Heritage James Moore had to apologize for making comments calling Bloc MPs traitors, following House rules. However, outside of the House the Conservatives had no problem using the label of "traitors" in the media, and described the coalition crisis as "a coup" (Palmer and Ljunggren, 2008). Harper went to the Governor General to request a prorogation of Parliament shortly after the heated exchange of coalition rhetoric in the House that was targeting the Conservatives party as a broken coalition of the former Progressive Conservative and Reform parties, with the opposition saying that their Conservative coalition was falling apart from not having the support of the people.

Fewer MPs spoke in the second session on the topic of Coalition Government, for two main reason, because (i) of its shortened period that ended in prorogation, and (ii) the

issue was for most part solved when they parties returned from the first prorogation (see Table 78). The Liberals had lost ground in the polls because of their actions on the issue, and Dion stepped down as the leader of the Liberals based on the election results and the party's continued weakness in the polls. The opposition frames in the House changed at this point as well, with the lone exception of the Conservatives'.

Table 78 demonstrates that the Conservatives once again spoke the most on the topic in terms of the number of MPs, but not in terms of the number of words spoken (see Table 76 above). Notably only new Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff was the only party leader to speak on the topic in the second session sample.

**Table 78: Top MPs's Frequency in the Second Parliamentary Session**

| No. | Party | MP Name, Region/Position | Freq. | Frame |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | BQ | Serge Cardin - Sherbrooke | 2 | Con-Lib Coalition |
| 2 | BQ | Thierry St-Cyr - Jeanne-Le Ber | 1 | Con-Lib Coalition |
| 2 | BQ | Christian Ouellet - Brome—Missisquoi | 1 | Con-Lib Coalition |
| 2 | BQ | Yves Lessard - Chambly—Borduas | 1 | Con-Lib Coalition |
| NOTE: 4 BQ MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | CPC | Leon Benoit - Vegreville—Wainwright | 4 | Against |
| 2 | CPC | Deepak Obhrai - Calgary East | 2 | Against |
| 2 | CPC | Greg Rickford - Kenora | 2 | Against |
| 2 | CPC | John Baird - Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities | 2 | Against |
| 2 | CPC | Rodney Weston - Saint John | 2 | Against |
| NOTE: 13 Conservative MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Lib | Mario Silva - Davenport | 1 | Success of Coalition |
| 1 | Lib | Mark Holland - Ajax—Pickering | 1 | Success of Coalition |
| 1 | Lib | Michael Ignatieff - Leader of the Opposition | 1 | Con-NDP Coalition |
| 1 | Lib | Navdeep Bains - Mississauga—Brampton South | 1 | Con-NDP Coalition |
| 1 | Lib | Paul Szabo - Mississauga South | 1 | Success of Coalition |
| 1 | Lib | Rodger Cuzner - Cape Breton—Canso | 1 | Con-NDP Coalition |
| 1 | Lib | Scott Brison - Kings—Hants | 1 | Success of Coalition |
| NOTE: 7 Liberal MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | NDP | Yvon Godin - Acadie—Bathurst | 3 | Pro-Coalition |
| 2 | NDP | Dennis Bevington - Western Arctic | 2 | Con-Lib Coalition |
| 2 | NDP | Olivia Chow - Trinity—Spadina | 2 | Pro-Coalition |
| 2 | NDP | Pat Martin - Winnipeg Centre | 2 | Con-Lib Coalition |
| NOTE: 6 NDP MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |

When the House returned in late January 2009, the NDP were still hopeful that the Liberals might decide to see the Coalition Government option through. However, a number of NDP MPs noted by February 3, 2009, the new Coalition Government would be a "Conservative-Liberal Coalition" because the Liberals began supporting each Conservative bill, during the period of leadership transition as Ignatieff still required confirmation as the official Liberal party leader (which happened on May 2, 2009). The NDP's Thomas Mulcair described on January 28, 2009, the new dynamic on the Hill that would weigh as a possibility early in the second session:

> It is all too obvious. They [the Conservatives] just want to get beyond the six-month time limit. All the constitutional experts who have written on the subject recently—35 experts all across Canada—agree that once six months have passed, the government will be able to call an election when it wants, but before that six month period is up, the opposition will have to be given a chance to govern. An opportunity has arisen: the progressive forces in the House—which represent 63% of the electorate and have a clear majority of seats—put their very real differences aside, shook hands, and said they would form a government in the interests of the country as a whole. They would put their differences aside and focus on what unites them. That is what was proposed. (40-2: *Hansard* – 3: 1/28/09 14:00)

However, he presented later in the same speech the reality that the second session would become, when he framed the Conservative-Liberal coalition that began again with the Liberal support of the new budget:

> The budget we saw yesterday is a fiction, and again we will see the Liberals complicit in it over the next few months. This will make 45 times that they have voted in favour of the Conservatives and expressed confidence in them. We are entering the fourth year in which the neo-Conservatives, the most right-wing government in Canadian history, have been kept in power by a party with the word Liberal in its name. (40-2: *Hansard* – 3: 1/28/09 14:00)

The reason the NDP spoke the most words during the second session was because they were communicating their frustration with the new Conservative-Liberal dynamic and they re-cast their party as the alternative to it.

During this period, the Liberals struggled to rebuild a credible frame. Some Liberal MPs attempted to say the Coalition Government threat had been a success because it influenced the Conservatives to change their policies:

> [It] began a period of historic co-operation, of opposition parties working together and talking about forming a coalition. It was, in fact, that coalition that forced the budget we are now dealing with today. Most of the provisions never would have even been imagined by Conservatives let alone introduced in this House. (Liberal MP Mark Holland - Ajax—Pickering; 40-2: *Hansard* – 7: 2/3/09 10:00)

At other times, the Liberals attempted to attack the NDP, saying a "Conservative-NDP" coalition had formed:

> Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that after weeks of berating the idea of a coalition, the Prime Minister seems to be hard at work forming one himself and with people whom he referred to, until this morning, as socialists. I am just wondering whether the Prime Minister could confirm his new-found love for socialism and does he not think it prudent to change his attack ads? (Michael Ignatieff - Leader of the Opposition; 40-2: *Hansard* – 80: 9/14/09 11:00)

The division among the opposition parties obviously played to the Conservatives favour.

This fact is clear as the Conservatives continued to fan the flaming words traded among the opposition into the third session. The Conservatives spoke the most on the Coalition Government issue again during the third session, preparing for the inevitable election battle against new Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff (see Table 79). They consistently went after Michael Ignatieff until the election in the House, asking for an official confirmation from him that he would not support a Coalition Government if the 2011 election led to a minority government, which he eventually affirmed, stating that he would respect the results of an election and not seek to create a Coalition Government (40-3: *Hansard* – 149: 3/25/2011 10:00:00 AM). Despite the affirmation, their attacks continued by questioning his statement with scepticism and they, therefore, kept the

Coalition Government frame fresh in the minds of Canadians, linking it to many issues to build support for their agenda.

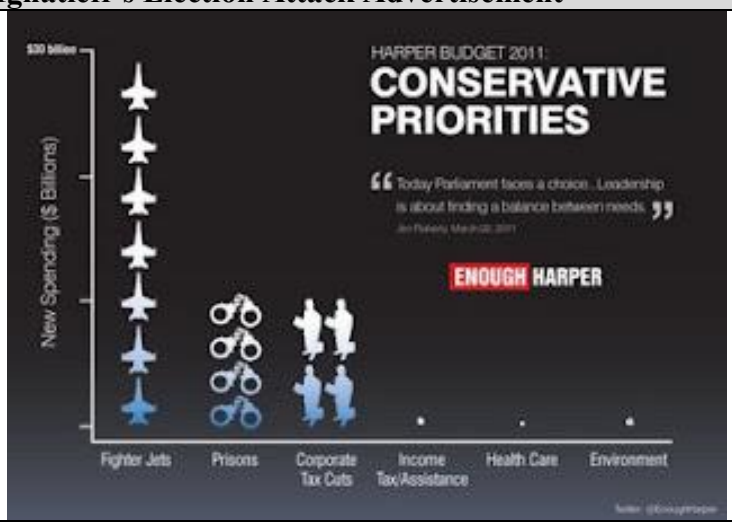
| Table 79: Top MPs's Frequency in the Third Parliamentary Session | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No.** | **Party** | **MP Name, Region/Position** | **Freq.** | **Frame** |
| 1 | BQ | Raynald Blais - Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine | 1 | For |
| 1 | BQ | Nicole Demers - Laval | 1 | For |
| 1 | BQ | Gilles Duceppe - Laurier—Sainte-Marie | 1 | For |
| 1 | BQ | Luc Malo - Verchères—Les Patriotes | 1 | For |
| NOTE: 4 BQ MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | CPC | John Baird - Leader of the Government in the House of Commons | 9 | Against |
| 2 | CPC | Tom Lukiwski - Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons | 6 | Against |
| 3 | CPC | Pierre Poilievre - Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs | 3 | Against |
| 3 | CPC | Stephen Harper - Prime Minister | 3 | Against |
| NOTE: 27 Conservative MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | Lib | John Cannis - Scarborough Centre | 3 | Con-Separatist Coalition |
| 2 | Lib | Denis Coderre - Bourassa | 2 | Con-Separatist Coalition |
| 3 | Lib | Alan Tonks - York South—Weston | 1 | Con-Separatist Coalition |
| 4 | Lib | Marlene Jennings - Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine | 1 | Con-Separatist Coalition |
| 5 | Lib | Michael Ignatieff - Leader of the Opposition | 1 | *Denies Lib-NDP Coalition |
| 6 | Lib | Michael Savage - Dartmouth—Cole Harbour | 1 | Con-Separatist Coalition |
| 7 | Lib | Sukh Dhaliwal - Newton—North Delta | 1 | Con-Separatist Coalition |
| NOTE: 7 Liberal MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 1 | NDP | Jack Layton - Toronto—Danforth | 3 | For |
| 2 | NDP | Alex Atamanenko - British Columbia Southern Interior | 1 | For |
| 3 | NDP | Thomas Mulcair - Outremont | 1 | For |
| NOTE: 3 NDP MPs are listed in this sample in total. | | | | |

At this time, the Bloc and NDP reaffirmed that the coalition could always be an option, but Ignatieff stated he would not support it leading into the election campaign:

> Mr. Speaker, that is completely absurd. I would never reject the results of a democratic election. I personally support the principles of democracy; they are the ones who are demonstrating contempt. It did not need to go this far. The Conservatives could have listened to families. The Conservatives could have listened to Parliament. They chose not to. Instead, they chose fighter jets, mega-jails and gifts to corporations. (40-3: *Hansard* – 149: 3/25/2011 10:00:00 AM)

“Fighter jets, mega-jails and gifts to corporations” became Ignatieff’s election attack slogan, and it was used in ads and on the campaign trail in numerous speeches. Figure 19 presents one version of the Liberals’ attack frame that was forwarded by a backchannel group called “Enough Harper”.

**Figure 19: Ignatieff’s Election Attack Advertisement**




**Source:** We moved to Canada (Blog). (2001). Conservative Priorities. Retrieved from http://wmtc.blogspot.com/2011_03_01_archive.html

In contrast, Jack Layton noted that the Liberals had helped to prop up the Conservative government numerous times since 2008, and he made the NDP’s election frame as a clear and unique alternative to the other parties, one that would not work to prop up the Conservatives:

> Mr. Speaker, I remember there was a proposal to form a coalition. The leader the second party at the time, the now Prime Minister, invited me to a meeting in his office after the election in 2004. He said that he wanted to introduce me to the member from Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the Bloc Québécois. He said that they had a plan because they did not think Mr. Martin necessarily had the right to take control of Parliament, even though he had the most seats. […] I was the one who said that there was no way I would help make Stephen Harper prime minister. In fact, I said that I would work to ensure he did not. (40-3: *Hansard* – 148: 3/24/11 10:00:00 AM)

Duceppe brought forth Harper’s 2004 letter at this time to demonstrate the Conservatives’ changing position concerning a Coalition Government, and shortly afterward on March

30, 20011, CBC's Terry Milewski broke the story of a document written by Tom Flanagan and Stephen Harper that described how the Right could retake power from the "benign dictatorship" of the Liberals through the use of a Coalition Government (Milewski, 2011). The third session came to an end with the Coalition Government possibility still weighing on the minds of Canadians with polls showing a possible return to minority government in 2011.

5. What other issues were linked to the "Coalition Government" offensive?

Another attack strategy the Conservatives used to frame Ignatieff and the Liberals was to link other issues with a potential negative outcome if a Liberal-led coalition came to power. The strategy was one of the most interesting findings from using the issue unit textual analysis method to better understand the data captured in the Coalition Government sample in the third parliamentary session, because of which key issues rose to the top of the concordance analysis. Table 80 represents just a few of the indexed attempts to situate the Coalition Government as bad for Canadians in terms of a variety of issues debated in the House.

| Table 80: Issues the Conservatives Linked to Coalition Government | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Issue** | **MP** | **Statement** |
| Crime | John Baird - Leader of the Government in the House of Commons | Mr. Speaker, I hope the coalition over there is not coming apart at the seams. We are very concerned that so much important legislation, written by the hand of the Minister of Public Safety, has been stuck in committee for more than 18 months. This government will work with anyone who wants to finally get tough on crime and on criminals. Mr. Speaker, we believe we have an important responsibility to make this Parliament work and that is exactly what we have been doing. (40-3: *Hansard* – 123: 2/3/11 10:00) |
| Election Costs | John Baird - Leader of the Government in the House of Commons | The Liberals want to simply set aside the results of the next election campaign and form a reckless and unstable coalition with their friends in the Bloc Québécois and in the NDP. Worse yet, they refuse to be honest and transparent about it. Instead of wasting $400 million on an unnecessary election, let us work to improve the quality of lives of seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement for those women and men who built our country and need our help. (40-3: *Hansard* – 148: 3/24/11 10:00) |
| Economy | Tilly O'Neill Gordon - Miramichi | Mr. Speaker, the difference between our Conservative government and the Liberal-Bloc-NDP coalition is stark. While we are focused on the economy and jobs, the coalition is focused on reckless new spending and tax hikes. We have seen more than 420,000 jobs created since July 2009. The IMF and the OECD project Canada will lead the G7 in growth over 2010-11. Yesterday, the IMF praised "...Canada's standing as the strongest position in the G7". Today, Statistics Canada reported Canada's economy grew again in August for the 11th time in the last 12 months. Clearly, we are getting the job done. On the other hand, the coalition's reckless spending and tax hikes would put Canada in a permanent deficit and destroy Canada's economic advantage. Indeed, according to experts, its tax hikes would kill almost 400,000 jobs. Tax hikes on families and killing Canadian jobs is the coalition plan, and it is the wrong plan. (40-3: *Hansard* – 90: 10/29/10 10:00) |
| Israel | Chris Warkentin - Peace River | That is why recently, in a Helen Thomas moment, the position of the coalition became clear. In an interview with the NDP House leader, she said that she believed the Israeli occupation actually began in 1948, essentially with the creation of the state of Israel. She also said that she supported the boycott, divestment, and sanctions against the Israeli state as well. These comments by the member of the Liberal-NDP coalition are shocking and inappropriate. I call on the Liberal leader now to join me in demanding an apology from the Liberals' NDP partners over there. (40-3: *Hansard* – 61: 6/11/10 10:00) |
| Senate Reform | Stephen Harper - Prime Minister | [W]e talk about democracy and the leader of the NDP, this is a man who after the election set out to form a coalition to overturn the results of that election so he could appoint members to the Senate. If the leader of the NDP is serious about Senate reform, he can support the government's Senate reform bills that are before the House. (40-3: *Hansard* – 98: 11/17/10 14:00) |

| Table 80: Issues the Conservatives Linked to Coalition Government (Cont'd) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Issue** | **MP** | **Statement** |
| Taxes | Jacques Gourde - Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière | By refusing to go along with the people's verdict, the Liberal coalition with the NDP and the Bloc—the famous big spenders coalition—shows that the Liberal leader's ego is more important to him than our country's best interests. But that should come as no surprise because this is not the first time the Liberal leader has chosen to ignore Canadians' and Quebeckers' real concerns. At the height of the global economic downturn, he was the one who wanted to increase taxes. (40-3: *Hansard* – 59:6/9/10 14:00) |
| Voters (by demographics): Families, Seniors, Students, Women. | Lisa Raitt - Minister of Labour | I must point out that I was reading in this week's issue of Maclean's magazine a quote from a senior Liberal adviser who stated that the Liberals needed to win back votes who are largely female, largely under 50, largely suburban and largely non-Anglo-Saxon. In answer to the member's question, that would be a great description of my riding, quite frankly, and me, except in terms of ethnicity. However, it is clear from the position of the opposition party that the Liberals have given up on that very demographic. They have given up on seniors, young families, working-class people, volunteers, entrepreneurs and students. However, we should not be too surprised. As I said in the beginning, I am here to work for my constituents. I am here only because of my constituents and every day I think about what is better for them. It is very clear that the coalition will be led by a Leader of the Opposition who is not in it for Canadians, like we are in it for our constituents, and is clearly in it for himself. Otherwise, the opposition would not be turning down a budget that would be very beneficial for my constituents and for people who are severely affected across the country. The leader did not come back for Canadians and that could not be more obvious than right now. (40-3: *Hansard* – 148: 3/24/11 10:00) |

It is clear on a closer read of these sample excerpts that the economy and job growth were the top of issues that the Conservatives campaigned on by linking the potential of a Coalition Government with many other issues in an aggressive coordinated strategy.

6. The Agenda Setting Assessed: Overall, what happened in the Parliament every day on the "Coalition Government" issue?

The Conservative anti-Coalition Government offensive can thus be viewed in hindsight as a successful strategy that helped them to build their first majority government in the new millennium. Their onslaught in the House began on December 1,

2008, and reappeared after they regained their confidence and footing in the third session in 2011. Jean Chrétien's adage (discussed in the previous chapter; Chrétien, 2007, p. 210) that an issue that divides the opposition is a good one for the government can clearly be reflected in the Conservatives' anti-Coalition Government offensive that kept the opposition divided upon the return from the first prorogation. Without the Liberal leadership's support of the coalition, the Bloc and NDP were forced to reposition their frames and target the Liberals. The coalition indeed fell apart completely.

Given the polls, after the critical date of December 4, 2008, the evidence above would demonstrate that the wave of Conservative rhetoric remained persuasive enough to split the opposition parties' support and, therefore, keep them fighting among themselves. Until the 2011 election, Harper only found partners for support during the 40th parliament on a case-by-case basis, until his first use of prorogation led to his effective use of the "anti-Coalition Government" frame to capitalize on the waning Liberals to prop up his government. Even with the success of his frame, Harper's Cabinet became fragile in his second term with a number of ministers being shifted around or removed completely due to various scandals or negative media attention for their handling of portfolios (e.g. Rona Ambrose, Maxime Bernier, Helena Guergis, Bev Oda, and Lisa Raitt).

His budgetary spending on the $1.2 billion G20 summit in Toronto and the size of his 38 member Cabinet—one of the largest in Canadian history—were also in question during the economic recession period. The PMO was being questioned for over-extending its reach in a number of public administration areas such as the Canadian census, cutting funding to charities and non-governmental organizations for ideological reasons, and politicizing women's sexual reproductive health internationally. The

Ignatieff Liberals targeted the Conservative policies in attack ads and media events, where the frame of the Conservative agenda was summarized in as “Fighter jets, mega-jails and gifts to corporations”.

The May 2, 2011 election was called when a motion of non-confidence was filed against the government based on contempt of parliament for not for not meeting Opposition requests for details of proposed bills and their cost estimates, which had been dragging on since the fall of 2010. The results of the 2011 election would be shocking to many Canadians, when the Harper Conservatives finally earned a majority government with 166 seats (an increase of 23), the Jack Layton led NDP became the official opposition with 103 seats (an increase of 67 seats), and the Liberals and Bloc had all but been crushed, earning just 34 and 4 seats respectively (a loss of 43 seats for each). The Bloc did not even have enough seats to be granted official party status in the House required for the per vote subsidy. Another change in the 2011 election was that Elizabeth May won her seat as the first elected Green party member.

It is quite reasonable to state that none of these feats would have been made possible without the Harper Conservatives’ anti-Coalition Government offensive. The detailed excerpts pulled from the *Hansard* database could perhaps better represent how the ACF model of agenda-setting operates to influence changes in partisan coalition building, and studies of the policies that each party forwarded during this period would provide a nuanced perspective of the ACF model working to change the Conservatives’ budget and other minority government bills. However, in contrast, the Kingdon agenda-setting model is clearly reflected in the analysis above through the evolution of frames

among each party as a closed unit. The data definitely represents the case that the parties changed their positions based on the transformations in:

1. the problem stream (e.g. the Conservatives prorogued Parliament as a response to the possible Coalition Government),

2. the policy stream (e.g. the Conservative budget dropped leaned to the Left in 2009, with stimulus during the recession, and influenced by the opposition),

3. and the political stream (e.g. the public opinion polls, and the number of seats in the House affected the Liberals' decision not to follow through with the Coalition Government agreement).

From these examples, Kingdon's model of agenda setting has been exceptionally useful for describing changes in the government's priorities. The digital methods have also supplemented the model by providing concise evidence of changes in each stream.

**Conclusion**

The anti-Coalition Government frame the Conservatives moved against the Liberals is now a defining moment in modern Canadian politics. The Liberal party suffered greatly at the polls in the 2011 election by the Conservatives effectively working to create the link in many voters' minds between the potential for another national crisis if a Liberal-led Coalition Government was created from a minority parliament. The Tories were able to set the agenda by focusing on and framing Dion and Ignatieff's leadership qualifications as unfit to command the highest political office in Canada. The attack ads were unique firsts in Canadian elections as they were delivered online through YouTube as well as through traditional media.

Puffin-gate led to Harper having to apologize to Liberal leader Dion for an overzealous staffer sending out a political ad that presented a bird defecating on Dion's

shoulder; Harper denied any foreknowledge of the ad or that he approved of the message before it was sent out. The damage was already done though, having moved the rhetoric to its furthest point on the spectrum, and then only slightly being brought back to right of centre in terms of how quality leadership was defined in Canada.

After the 2008 election, the Conservatives already had their arsenal of attack frames to repurpose and set the agenda against the opposition when they forwarded the Coalition Government. In the lead up to the prorogation period, the Conservatives' repeated assaults linked the Liberals with "Separatists and Socialists" in one of the lowest forms of political differentiation to occur in Canada's history, resulting in one Conservative MP having to apologize for calling the opposition traitors. Harper set the frame of the Coalition Government as "undemocratic", and then used it to for the rest of his minority government to foster the fear of another national crisis whenever it was politically expedient. It helped him to move the Conservatives' "Economic Action Plan" forward, with the single cost to his agenda being that the key items that caused the crisis were cut from the 2009 budget.

Some of the opposition members argued that the stimulus budget did in fact demonstrate the Coalition Government option had worked to set the agenda by holding the Conservatives to account and avoiding a complete austerity budget during the economic downturn. However, the costs to the Bloc and Liberals were much higher in the 2011 election. Canadians did not accept the Liberals' frame of "Fighter jets, mega-jails and gifts to corporations" after Ignatieff had supported the Conservatives in so many votes, and the consecutive years of the Liberals' slow decline were solidified in near ruin for the Canada's oldest political party in the 2011 election.

It is clear from the rhetoric in the latter two sessions of the 2009-2011 that every party believed that coalitions were formed on issue-by-issue bases among all of the parties, for differing purposes. The opposition continued its attempts to make the Conservative anti-coalition offensive backfire against the originators of the frame. The Conservatives as the first movers of the frame gained the most consistent long-running political cachet from it, particularly in using it to destroy the fortunes of the two Liberal leaders Dion and Ignatieff, as well as taking down the Bloc.

The anti-Coalition Government analysis is a case that distinctly demonstrates how rhetoric moves through the House and gains resonance over time. In this instance, the governing political party changed the playbook for dealing with potential non-confidence votes by re-writing the definition of Coalition Government into a frame that equated it with being undemocratic, forcing the opposition to consider the consequences of its actions in terms of potential popular backlash. They also used prorogation twice to avoid potentially damaging cases; both times the Conservatives came back stronger in the polls.

Overall, the anti-coalition frame may have changed it so that no Coalition Government will be able to succeed in Canada ever again, and instead, the Left may have to unite into one single party to beat the Conservatives, forming an official bond based on the previous coalition that could have been. Few could dispute the success of the Conservatives' minority government agenda-setting tactics that were demonstrated above by following the streams of rhetoric moving through *Hansard*, and then linking them to public opinion. The analysis keenly presented how studying rhetoric in informational objects allows researchers to establish the origins of frames that support government agendas. Other informational media streams, like Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube, could

possibly reflect similar trends, and further studies will help to address these gaps in our knowledge, while also demonstrating how Kingdon's agenda-setting theory could be updated for the Internet age by tracking all of those streams simultaneously.

## Conclusion

### Agenda Setting in English Canada: A Challenge in Minority Government Situations

Agenda setting is critical to any government's success. If unable to convince a plurality of voters that their agenda is best suited to the situation of their polity, governments fall. Setting an agenda—and selling an agenda—is the pinnacle factor of good governance. It is challenging at the best of times; in minority situations it requires true mastery. This dissertation explored how minority governments have set the agenda in English Canada. A historical look at agenda setting, in the early modern newspaper and radio age (e.g. King and Meighen's period), the modern mass media age of television, polling, and early personal computers (Diefenbaker, Pearson, Trudeau, Clark), and the Internet age (Martin, Harper), demonstrated the increasingly strong pressures on governments to develop their minority government playbook of successful "communication by stealth" strategies as Canada entered the "permanent campaign" era.

Canadian voters also changed over time. Where they once voted en masse (such as the during the Diefenbaker-Pearson elections when voter turnout reached a peak of 79.4 percent), participation rates have eroded and voters have segmented further according to the subject positions of region, gender, income, ethnicity, and religiosity. This has pressured the parties to move from omnibus "national unity" parties to increasingly more focused entities. Communicating this change—convincing traditional supporters to turn out and perhaps convincing "switchers", "undecideds", and "independents", to park their support with a party—required new approaches.

The new tactics included narrowing agendas, promoting wedge issues, priming voters using distracter frames, controlling committees through stalling tactics recorded in a formal party manual, proroguing parliament to avoid dealing with potentially damaging

issues, coordinating attacks on the opposition leadership across media formats, and using consistently strict media communication protocols filtered through the PMO to attract voters from specific populations segments, particularly bridging the interests of fiscal and social conservatives, to target the key voting block of middle class families and senior citizens. Using various coordinated forms of these tactics, the government set the agenda on the dismantling of the firearms registry, framed the skills and motivations of two opposition leaders as ineffective and weak with attack advertisements, and sold the illusion that Coalition Governments were undemocratic.

Savoie (1999; 2008; 2010) first identified the worrying anti-democratic trend of the centralization of power in the PMO that could be used to control government, and this dissertation has provided the insights into the agenda-setting strategies that the centralized Harper PMO used from 2006-2011. The surprising finding was that, even with the increased staff of the PMO, the Conservatives were unable to complete much of their agenda from 2008-2011, not just because their platform was vague with fewer easily delivered outcomes, unlike their previous five priorities strategy in 2006, but because of the outside problem stream factors of the Coalition Government crisis and the global economic recession. This finding countered the hypothesis proposed at the start of this dissertation that was articulated in the statement "I hypothesize that Savoie's centralization thesis will be reflected in the agenda-setting power of the PMO through a strict use of language frames and controlled policy announcements to push legislation through the House"; instead the increased size of the PMO's communication apparatus on Parliament Hill may be costing Canadians more and more with fewer tangible results, outside of helping to construct a majority government for the Conservatives.

Canadians may indeed begin to wonder what need does a majority government have for a larger PMO if it is not translating into legislative output?

This dissertation identified the successful tactics of agenda setting using a blend of descriptive analysis and a revised version of Kingdon's agenda-setting model (1995) that was adapted to the information age using Rogers's (2004) issue units tracking methodology. The issue units method provided data that lent itself to an interpretive analytic lens from which insights could be gleaned into how the Conservatives constructed, promoted, and reinforced their vision of a centre-right Conservative Canada through effectively managing their agenda-setting communications: platforms, campaign websites, Throne Speeches, and prime ministerial addresses, which were all designed to divide their opposition while building support for the Conservative agenda and brand across an increasingly segmented voter population.

The analysis presented a number of examples of the Conservatives leveraging the NDP to incrementally steal support away from the Liberals over the 2004-2011. They used the NDP's support on budget votes, the gun registry, and even forced every party in the House to support their frames on the Quebec Motion and Canada's Economic Action Plan through their keen use of agenda setting. It will be interesting to see in the years to come if, like King's play against Meighen in the 1920s, Stephen Harper has kept somewhere a secret diary where he also wrote down how he would deal with a Coalition Government challenge from his opposition prior to the event occurring, especially given that he was willing to enter into one in 2004 with the very "separatists and socialists" he decried, as Duceppe's letter released during the 2011 election evidently demonstrated.

The issue units method helped to add the following important insights for the Canadian minority government context:

1. **An Updated Agenda-Setting Analysis Model:** The issue unit method provided researchers a means for precisely and objectively identifying the top issues in a given political communication document or information object (i.e. the platforms, websites, speeches, *Hansard*, and digital media). This function alone added pertinent information to how each Canadian political party communicated their top messages to English-speaking voters during the post-millennial minority government era to achieve agenda dominance across media. The frequency counting of issue units demonstrated the frames parties chose to forward on particular issues, which could then be used in comparison with the opposition parities' frames and data points, like polls, election results, and media analyses. The resultant analysis provided a fuller picture of the narrative of minority government from 2004-2011, a period when the Conservative narrative overwrote that of the Chrétien-Martin Liberal dynasty. The new model created a foundation for the digital tracking method used in this dissertation, and the analysis of which led to the key finding of the Conservatives successful frames that focussed on middle class family voters and senior citizens.

2. **An Updated Definition of "Agenda":** Agendas had previously been viewed as the list of issues with which the government was dealing (e.g. from Cohen to Soroka). This dissertation demonstrated that the agenda is also a vision of the nation's future constructed from rhetoric, designed to simultaneously attract voters and reinforce a partisan voter subjectivity. This definition of "agenda" is built from the discourse analysis articulation that rhetoric is both an historical record and a means to critique the contemporary period. The competing party agendas are therefore different battling visions attempting to define what means to be a Canadian citizen. *Agenda-setting is therefore communication with a purpose: to control and maintain power of the Canadian imagined community.* It is the practice and application of social science tools to steer the government's priorities, while communicating its intentions to the nation.

3. **The Multiplication of Agendas:** The supply-side descriptive analyses of the election websites and the categorization of prime ministerial speeches illustrated the increased news cycle that the PMO and government must contend with in order to frame the issues among the noise of competing news channels and social media. When Harper came to power in 2006, his communication output exceeded Martin's on all fronts, and demonstrated the seasonality of the prime ministerial speeches for setting the agenda during the Fall and Winter months, while avoiding key holidays. Success in the "Permanent Campaign" era was demonstrated in the

resonance of the Conservatives issues units across media in the coordinated means they used to construct, promote, and reinforce their vision of a centre-right Conservative Canada to attract voters.

4. **The Types of Political Communication:** The results of the issue unit method also helped us to understand the different communicative purposes for each type of government document. The electoral platform was confirmed as the clearest statement of the government's intended vision for its agenda and time in power. The websites added dynamic instantaneous frames to the story of the platform during the election campaign to present the partisan spin on issues. The Throne Speech was found to be a diluted version of the platform that was more a symbolic institutionalized ritual, than the bold vision contained in the platform. The Throne Speech certainly in comparison did not seem to communicate any real eye-opening agenda-setting intentions, beyond translating the platform into legislative power for the public administration to follow as a guide for the coming parliament. The prime minister's speeches were an indicator of how active the executive leader was in interacting with Canadians outside of the House, disseminating the government's agenda on local, national, and international issues and policies. Its content was also designed to attract and retain particular audiences to partisan causes, selling the budget to the electorate.

5. **An Assessment of Party Differentiation Tactics:** Successful leadership and the maintenance of power in a minority situation required that the communication documents be crafted to differentiate the party's political vision from their electoral competitors to appeal to the increasingly segmented voters, offering a clear choice, otherwise one weakness in the systematic party communication strategy could provide fodder for the opposition, as the "Mr. Dithers" examples demonstrated during Martin's term or as in Harper's Coalition Government crisis in the early 2008-2009 period. The method demonstrated the varied uses of each information object, especially the uniqueness of the Conservatives' pivotal 2006 platform and election website campaign that set them apart from their opposition. The issue frequency results permitted the comparison of what the prime ministers said they were going to do with what they actually did in the House of Commons. This unique analysis forecasted the possibility of starting to assess the outcomes of the work prime ministers did in office on an on-going basis next to the rhetoric as it was generated. However, further development of the method would be required to automate the analysis online.

6. **A New Suite of Metrics and Tools:** The use of Digital Humanities techniques demonstrated possibilities of linking this information with other research tools and methods of analysis, such as polls, electoral results, and bill outputs. In time, and with enough data, scholars may be able to come up with an automated

> regression metric to measure how language affects a bill's chances of becoming law as it moves through the policy and political streams, and then measure its impact afterward in the problem stream. Far more works needs to be done to accomplish this successfully, and it will require linking the data sets and attempting to track errors across the data sets, which is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. For the time being, this dissertation has taking a step in this direction by demonstrating how to track issue unit dominance in digital objects.

For these reasons and more, the analysis improved our understanding of Canadian federal political communication during minority government in the hypermodern age, and helped to present the power of a centralized PMO through its messaging as it worked to divide the opposition during a volatile period in order to construct a majority government in 2011.

The successful Harper tactics were best viewed in its ability to select appropriate populist issues to shore up their base (e.g. fiscal and social conservatives), and frame issues to split their opposition, as was clearly the case with the gun registry and Coalition Government case studies, thereby becoming the party that could attract the most electoral support. The tactical endgame in 2011 was the realization of the plans Stephen Harper and Tom Flanagan  had proposed during their Reform party days in order to eventually win a Conservative majority and place the Conservative ideology as the most popular Canadian choice for political power (in terms of electoral ridings at least, not in terms of popular vote).

Dobell (2000) and Russell (2008) particularly helped to identify the limiting factors of minority government after an election as (i) a prime minister's decision making and leadership skills, (ii) the make-up and support of their Cabinet, and (iii) the balance of power in the House. These factors were slightly refined through the analysis process, and changed to include a fourth category to better understand agenda setting successes in

minority government, which were summarized throughout the dissertation to track their (i) Executive Style (i.e. were they monarchical or collaborative), (ii) abilities to Frame the Agenda, (iii) understanding Institutional Factors (i.e. Cabinet and balance of power in the House), and (iv) how did they use new media technologies to their advantage; an overall summary of these tactics is provided in Appendix I: A Summary of Minority Government Success 1922-2011. These four factors were read into the past minority governments to demonstrate successful framing tactics in the prime ministerial playbook that shifted on the spectrum of partnering with other parties to maintain power, or choosing to go it alone in a minority situation, thereby having to craft policy on case-by-case basis through brokered support.

The examples of these strategies spanned across the technological ages in Canada, from King's use of the newspaper and radio to frame the Meighen Conservatives as antiquated British loyalists, to Harper's attack YouTube videos that framed Dion and Ignatieff's respective leaderships. Each use of technology reflected the imagined communities within the uniquely Canadian political experience and technoculture of its time. The rapidly evolving technological environment demanded responsive, consistent, and clear messaging—especially when Canadians were increasingly turning a cold shoulder to politics. Centralizing power in the PMO for the use of communication dominance and prorogation were not on any playbook list prior to the Harper era, but they can now be added to the playbook of options representing the executive style of prime-minister focused leadership, rather than a cabinet or decentralized approached, because of the Harper Conservatives.

Chapters three and four used the analysis of issue salience and their ideational

frames (i.e. first and second level agenda-setting attributes) to identify instances in early modern and modern minority governments where prime ministers had successfully distinguished themselves on the issues that mattered most to earn majority governments from the electorate. The top innovative issue strategies included:

1. **The Visionary Agenda:** Diefenbaker's first minority that was framed as the "Vision" of "One Canada" framed the leader as channelling Canadians' frustrations with the Liberals' dynasty and sense of entitlement to power into support for an alternative plan for commonwealth trade, domestic reforms, infrastructure, and agricultural policies to help farmers' incomes. The plan was designed to support a population of 200 million people in the future.
2. **Framing Leadership Renewal:** Pearson's choice to back the youthful Trudeau as leader reframed the Liberal party's renewal as looking to the future of Canada under its new flag, having become one of the most successful prime ministers of minority government in terms of legislative output and fostering Canada's social safety net with the help of the NDP. Trudeau-mania was also built from Pearson's decade long clashes with Diefenbaker. In contrast to the Liberals, Harper would show the other side of framing leadership in terms of his negative attacks on Dion and Ignatieff from 2006-2011.
3. **Consensus Building:** Trudeau's partnership with the NDP during his lone minority government led to the Liberals' return to a majority by framing the leader as someone who built consensus, rather than being an aloof elitist.

In this way, the issue and the frame analysis highlighted an alternative way of reading the agenda-setting abilities of past minority governments to set the agenda, namely through emphasizing the changes within the executive and PMO over the years, from the decentralized Cabinet-supported executive under Pearson, to the centralized prime minister executive style of Harper.

In chapters five and six, Rogers's issue unit tracking (2004) was aligned with Kingdon's agenda-setting model (1995) to demonstrate how framing rhetoric that represents key issues can be tracked automatically online in digital objects at this point in history. The revision to Kingdon's agenda-setting model for the information era allowed

us to understand the further limitations on controlling a prime minister's agenda during minority government in the information age. In particular, the method helped to identify several unique issues where the Harper Conservatives successfully outmanoeuvred their opposition during minority government by opening policy windows to forward their agenda and to maintain power, including the key example of remaining silent on gun control after the Jane Creba shooting in Toronto during the 2006 election campaign, which the media helped to frame as the Liberals capitalizing on a traumatic event. Another key example was the Conservatives returning from their first prorogation in 2008 with Canada's Economic Action Plan as a "stimulus" package to counter the Coalition Government opposition that attacked them for doing little to deal with the economic downturn.

Chapters five to seven, unanimously demonstrated the success of Harper's 2006 agenda that was reflected in the highly refined five key point strategy that focused on "accountability", "child care tax credits", "cutting the GST", "patient wait time guarantees", and "tough on crime". Their issue units were consistently delivered and coordinated across media in the Conservatives' platforms, websites, speeches, and outlays to attract middle class families. Analyzing those same objects demonstrated that Harper's 2008 agenda was usurped by the 2008 global economic crisis and the possibility of a Coalition Government. However, further analyses in the case studies of the gun registry and Coalition Government (chapters seven and eight respectively) offered insights into how wedge politics, attack advertisements, and prorogation were used to divide and conquer the opposition during the 2008-2011 period. Taken together, the political tools of government and consequential communication strategies identified in

this dissertation were best harnessed by the Conservatives to forward their vision and agenda during the Internet era, as the evidence supports throughout this dissertation, along with their increased seat totals in each consecutive election.

Along with the framing tactics, this research project also captured the changed rhythm of agenda setting and framing from the PMO that has multiple media forms and digital channels to respond to the ever-increasing speed of its media environment. The new Harper tactics included the rise of negative "frames" in attack ads that were both televised and delivered via YouTube. These tactics were taken from the U.S., and represented a similar "strict" parent frame as the Bush Republicans' mode of dominating its opponents through discourse. The Conservatives' rhetoric became more specific to hone in on middle class families to gain support from an increasingly segmented and disengaged electorate, while using a larger arsenal of communication tools to measure the national mood and remain sensitive to changes in the political stream.

Canadians may begin to reflect on the Conservatives' messaging that developed during the minority period, and onward, as it develops during their 2011 majority government, to truly understand if the Conservative agenda represents an acceptable long-term vision of Canadian values to sustain the country in the Internet Age, after the end of the Liberal dynasty. In particular, the latter two case studies in chapters eight and nine helped to identify the complex coordinated media campaigns that the Conservatives used to forward their agenda-setting frames and encoded language:

- **The Conservatives' Gun Registry Messaging:** The Conservatives framed their scrapping of the long gun registry as "Tough on Crime", stating that registering long guns was undemocratic, it did not save lives, and it turned common law abiding Canadians into criminals; however, they simultaneously also stated that the handgun registry did in fact save lives and deserved to be continued.

- **The Conservatives' "Tough on Crime" Agenda:** The Conservatives framed their omnibus crime bill that includes longer mandatory prison sentences as "Tough on Crime", without increasing money for rehabilitation to reduce crime further for those who go to prison because of the new laws. This tactic capitalized on Canadians fears of crimes captured in the media lens, but many have argued do not match the reality of funding more prisons to house criminals, especially during a time when the national crime rate had been dropping for years and during troubling economic times.

- **Prorogation:** The Conservatives framed proroguing parliament as an acceptable way to avoid potential crises in the House.

- **Coalition Government:** The Conservatives framed Coalition Government as undemocratic, when in fact they are not, and they also saw no ethical or political issues with using attack ads to frame the opposition leaders as a lame duck (e.g. Dion), or self-interested (e.g. Ignatieff), as acceptable forms of political differentiation over that of substantive policy critiques for what a Coalition Government might accomplish.

Future research will have to clarify the use of issue units and framing in Quebec during the 2004-2011 period to understand if French Canadian framing was fundamentally different from English Canada's. As well, more studies using the new e-tools will have to be conducted in other national contexts to better understand comparative aspects of political communication strategies. The infographics and rhetorical maps in this dissertation that were developed by means of the issue units analysis were useful tools for orienting the political agenda landscape of the post-millennial period. The raw word frequency counts provided one way to reveal the issue-frame links developed by each party, while the more accurate Key Word In Context (KWIC) analysis of the top issue words and couplets generated a distinct advantage for honing in on words used within their contextualized sentences in a given text to identify who said what and when. Such accessible and user-friendly software did not exist as a research tool over a decade ago,

and it will truly change how research is conducted as it is adapted to the Internet age.

To date, no software has been developed to achieve automatic instantaneous analyses of information objects without the human tailoring of the data source, but a future suite of tools could be developed and refined to provide a means of monitoring national media, political websites, blogs, and other such information objects simultaneously through metadata standards. This digital dawn is not far beyond the horizon. In fact, the level of possible social media analysis that is now possible on one personal computer alone was never possible before this past decade in terms of tracking all varieties of media: national newspapers, radio, and television communication. The amount of data processed in this dissertation alone would have taken a large team in the 1990s, and simply would not have been possible in some instances.

Aristotle defined human beings as the "rational animal", and the political communication analyzed in this dissertation focused on the rational side of our competitive social forces, especially in terms of Kingdon's stream model that is based on rational democratic voter choices. Recent communication theory, however, has taken a turn to focus on what humans can learn from our instinctual "animal" side of the communication spectrum. Anyone who has encountered the work of famed naturalists like Jack Hanna, Brain Keating, or Dan Riskin may know of evolutionary biology's "Four 'F's" that describe the main animal behaviors for survival: Fighting, Fleeing, Feeding, and Reproduction (the fourth 'F' being suppressed for good form), each of which could be read into our political animals above.

The animal kingdom can be very telling for reminders of how our political communication strategies have evolved for long-term survival and power: from the

brightest-coloured turkey waddles reflecting the virility and vitality of the male in the species; or the brilliant feathers of whooping cranes displayed in mating dances to attract reproductive partners; to the social climbing abilities of our closest mammalian relative, the chimpanzee, who uses exhibits of aggression to attract mates – these survival instincts are similar to each political communication object in this dissertation that were analyzed to better understand how the "political animal" attracts voters and attempts to retain power, through the highest forms of evolutionary communication mechanisms available at this point in history. Communication in this reductive form is about displaying the best characteristics (or coloured feathers) of each party – in a collapsed evolutionary or historical perspective the leap may not be that large from feathers, to fur, to hair, to tribal dress attire, to family crests, to political party logos, to party websites, to imagined ideological communities.

Perhaps, the most apt metaphor for the digital tools used to analyze the new websites and informational objects in this dissertation could be the infrasonic communication elephants use to communicate across great distances, and which humans and other animals cannot hear. The new e-tools used in this dissertation allow researchers to pinpoint the subliminal messages of the uniquely evolved digital political animals and, in the process, we have built a better understanding of how the contemporary political animal is communicating to attract supporters and voters. It provided a means to hone in on the *near* infrasonic communication techniques that have evolved to this point in history, to which few have access without the economic means, unless open and free e-tools to analyze those same messages are constructed for democratic and transparent purposes.

The data collected throughout the dissertation can in fact be organized in such a way as to help us imagine the war room of tomorrow that uses automated digital tools to track and assess the four factors of successful minority governments, thereby presenting the political chessboard with ever more clarity in order to help strategize, and use game theory to see the next successful agenda-setting play well ahead of the opposition (e.g. see Appendix I: A Summary of Minority Government Success 1922-2011). Many other measurements of online activity are most likely also included in the war room arsenal at this point, such as tracking partisan blogger support, Facebook members, Twitter followers, YouTube video views, Wikipedia articles, party website donations and views, media mentions, mobile application downloads, party memberships, pre-election polls, voter turnout, and riding demographics; all of these could obviously also be included along with the four factors of minority government success to present a clearer picture of the developing arsenal of political communication metrics in the Internet age war room.

The evidence demonstrated some of the best practices for minority government in the Internet age included harnessing social media technology and issue networks to galvanize a party's base and attract new voters from key segments, like the Harper Conservatives did between 2006 and 2011, focusing on middle class families and using Canada's Economic Action Plan to alleviate Canadian's fears of a long-term economic depression.

Throughout this dissertation, the evidence revealed the incremental strategy that the Conservatives employed, using the NDP's help, to attack the centrist Liberals from both sides of the political spectrum, diminishing the Liberals' support with each election from 2004 to 2011. The strategy led to a completely new political map and orientation in

federal Canadian politics, with the Conservatives winning a majority in 2011 and the NDP becoming the official opposition. Their strategy demonstrated an intense working knowledge of how to set the agenda, using case-by-case support from across the political spectrum to lead on the key issues of the day, tirelessly constructing their messages set by the PMO, and reinforcing their key issue campaigns across media types. Overall, the evidence demonstrated how opposition parties will remain isolated and ineffectual as long as they cannot broker deals and bargain to forward their agendas, while also creating messaging that frames their actions as distinct from their competitors and challenges the government of the day with enough authority to threaten their hold on power.

## Appendix I
## A Summary of Minority Government Success 1922-2011

| TABLE 81: Summary of the Factors Affecting Successful Minority Governments in Canada (The Levers of Power) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GOVERNMENT** | **EXECUTIVE STYLE** | **AGENDA SETTING** | | **INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS** | | **SIGNIFICANT MEDIA TECHNOLOGY** | **DURATION (Sitting Days)** | **LEGISLATIVE OUTPUT AVE. (%)** |
| | | **KEY ISSUE(S)** | **FRAMING** | **CAB.** | **THE HOUSE** | | | |
| **Harper:** *40th Parliament*: November 18, 2008 to March 26, 2011 | Monarchical **THE PMO: 107 members** | - Coalition Government - Economic Action Plan | Successful | PM centered | BQ: 49 CP: 143 LPC: 77 NDP: 37 | Internet: Social Media, Mobile Apps | 292 | 31.7 |
| **Harper:** *39th Parliament:* Apr. 3, 2006 to Sept. 7, 2008 | Monarchical **PMO: 87** | Five Priorities | Successful | PM centered | BQ: 51 CP: 124 LPC: 103 NDP: 29 | Internet: Blogs | 294 | 52.0 |
| **Martin:** *38th Parliament*: Oct. 4, 2004 to Nov. 29, 2005 | Monarchical / later partnered with the NDP **PMO: 75-85** | Social programs | Failed | PM centered | BQ: 54 CP: 99 LPC: 135 NDP: 19 | Internet: Party Websites | 160 | 56.1 |
| **Clark:** *31st Parliament*: Oct. 9, 1979 to Dec. 14, 1979 | Monarchical/ **PMO: 70-80** | The Economy / N.E.P. | Failed | Two Tiered - Broken ranks | Cred.: 6 LPC: 114 NDP: 26 PC: 136 | TV / Polls / Computers | 49 | 21.4 |
| **Trudeau:** *29th Parliament*: Jan. 4, 1973 to May 9, 1974 | Collaborative / Partnered with the NDP/ **PMO: 70-80** | The Economy | Successful | PM centered | Cred.: 15 LPC: 109 NDP: 31 PC: 107 | TV / Polls / Computers | 256 | 57.8 |
| **Pearson:** *27th Parliament*: Jan. 18, 1966 to Apr. 23, 1968 | Collaborative / Partnered with the NDP | Social programs | Successful | Cabinet centered | CCF: 21 LPC: 131 PC: 97 SC/Cd.: 14 | TV / Polls | 405 | 89.9 |
| **Pearson:** *26th Parliament*: May 16, 1963 to Sept. 8, 1965 | Collaborative / Partnered with the NDP | The Economy | Mixed results | Cabinet centered | CCF: 17 LPC: 129 PC: 95 SC: 24 | TV / Polls | 418 | 86.9 |
| **Diefenbaker:** *25th Parliament*: Sept. 27, 1962 to Feb. 6, 1963 | Monarchical | U.S. Missiles | Failed | PM centered - Broken ranks | CCF: 19 LPC: 100 PC: 116 SC: 30 | TV / Polls | 72 | 51.5 |
| **Diefenbaker:** *23rd Parliament*: Oct.14, 1957 to Feb. 6, 1958 | Monarchical | The Economy | Successful | PM centered | CCF: 25 LPC: 107 PC: 112 SC: 19 | TV / Polls | 78 | 90.0 |
| **Meighen:** *15th Parliament* (Cont'd): June 29, 1926 to July 2, 1926 | Monarchical | The Byng Affair | Failed | PM centered - Broken ranks | CCF: 9 LPC: 116 PC: 91 Prog.: 13 SC / Lb: 14 | Newspaper / News Reels / Radio | 3 | 0 |
| **King:** *15th Parliament*: Jan. 7, 1926 to June 26, 1926 | Collaborative / Partnered with the Progressives | The Byng Affair | Successful | Cabinet centered | LPC: 101 PC: 116 Prog.: 24 Lab: 2 | Newspaper / News Reels / Radio | 108 | 61.5 |
| **King:** *14th Parliament*: Mar. 8, 1922 to Sept. 5, 1925 | Collaborative / Partnered with the Progressives | Trade Tariffs | Mixed results | Cabinet centered | LPC: 117 PC: 50 Prog.: 64 Lab: 3 | Newspaper / News Reels / Radio | 366 | 85.1 |

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