ALEX MARLAND AND THIERRY GIASSON, EDS

CANADIAN ELECTION ANALYSIS

Communication, Strategy, and Democracy

2015

POINTS DE VUE SUR L'ÉLECTION CANADIENNE

Communication, stratégie et démocratie

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Editors' Remarks: Recapping The 2015 Canadian Election

Anna Esselment, Thierry Giasson, Andrea Lawlor, Alex Marland and Tamara A. Small are authors and editors within the UBC Press series Communication, Strategy and Politics. Books include *Political Marketing in Canada* (2012) and *Political Communication in Canada: Meet the Press and Tweet the Rest* (2014). Work is underway on follow-up books about permanent campaigning in Canada and about political elites in Canada.

For many voters, this was a referendum on Stephen Harper continuing on as prime minister; for those who wanted change, it was also about which party and leader would ensure change. Immediate post-election reflection centred on the idea that with a new government, Canadian politics will not only have a different tone, but it will be fundamentally different. Yet, a change in political administration, even after a long stint in power by a single party, is not transformation so much as it is normal. Governments come and go and, in Canada, ten-year stretches of a single party in power are hardly unprecedented. What makes the 2015 federal election different is the way that the structure and dynamics of the campaign led to the third-place party winning a majority of seats.

Plenty happened during this historic eleven-week long campaign. The outset of the election featured the New Democratic Party and its leader Tom Mulcair as a competitive and viable governing alternative, the governing Conservative Party and Harper as an experienced and steady hand on the economy, and the Liberal Party led by Justin Trudeau with much to prove to voters. There was enough of a shift over 78 days in the articulated priorities of Canadians, from a focus on middle-class families and the Senate scandal, to a far more diverse set of interests that led to conversations about security, individual rights, and our responsibility as global citizens. Indeed, there was a change in voters' mindset and priorities during this campaign. Whereas the Conservative Party's negative communication irreparably damaged Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff in 2008 and 2011, this time Canadians appeared to push back against the negative campaign style that dominated the last few weeks of the campaign. Many voters articulated an interest in Canada as a cooperative agent, a promoter of multilateralism on the world stage, an environmental crusader, and as a comfortable middle power. On the other hand, we might question whether party politics itself has changed. The election results mark a return to the Liberals being Canada's "natural governing party" heading up a so-called two-plus party system with the NDP back in third place, a similar distribution of seats to the early 2000s (albeit, with a smaller role for the Bloc Québécois, and the presence of the Green leader), and a Trudeau once again heading up the Prime Minister's Office.

What transpired to bring us back from a Conservative agenda, the precipice of a more polarized party system, and the possibility of minority governance? The governing Conservatives calculated every advantage: years of permanent campaigning in the form of the Economic Action Plan, a balanced budget, enhanced (and retroactive) benefits for families just before the writ drop, a pre-campaign branding of the Liberal leader as not ready to govern, the ability to greatly outspend their opponents, campaign rules that limited the influence of special interests, and a healthy dose of public opinion on their side. It was a strategy that couldn't fail as long as enough voters opted for the *status quo* in the face of concern about the alternatives. And yet, it did.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation is that the "change vote" among citizens was palpable and the only question was around which opposition leader, Mulcair or Trudeau, that vote would coalesce. They both took risks in changing their party's typical stance on government spending: the NDP moved to the centre by promising a balanced budget, while the Liberals

moved to the left by pledging budget deficits. Many NDP supporters in 2011 decamped when they saw a shift in support, beginning in Quebec, proliferate around the country. Low expectations of the Liberal leader provided the opportunity for him to exceed them by not stumbling throughout the campaign, resurrecting the Liberal brand along the way. At the same time, the Conservatives were struck by the negative coverage of Senator Duffy's trial and by external events that did them no favours. A stock market plunge or a terrorism incident would have fed into the Conservative message of sticking with economic stability and security. Instead, the party responded coldly to the Syrian refugee crisis and then descended into the pitfalls of setting conditions on when women should be allowed to wear a niqab in Canada.

Polls also told a variety of stories explaining the twists and turns of the campaign. The real change was in *what the polls were used for* in this election. Poll aggregators and seat projection sites became more familiar to Canadians who consulted them frequently. The conversation about strategic voting was heavily reliant on local polling numbers and on "reading the riding" through observing which constituencies had the potential to be leveraged for strategic considerations. The general theme in the media seemed to be that the polls may not be able to predict the results until quite late in the campaign, but that they were playing an increasingly important role in micro-level outcomes.

Thus, on the surface, it looks like Canadian political science can dispense with the conversation about party system realignment—at least for the moment—since a decade roughly fits with party cycles of reorganization and reestablishment over the past thirty years. While the 2015 election doesn't represent a *change to a new system* (or even a clear entrenchment of the change that many people supposed had already happened), it represents a *change back* to a fairly familiar Parliament. A surprise outcome to say the least.

Editors' Note (Marland and Giasson)

This project was initially inspired by the UK Election Analysis initiative following the last British election in May 2015. Impressed by the feat that James Jackson and Einar Thorsen from Bournemouth University achieved in assembling, in 10 days, 71 short post-electoral analyses in a downloadable open-access e-book, we decided to challenge ourselves, as well as over 60 other Canadian academics, journalists and pollsters, to do the same for Canada's 2015 federal election.

We expected our idea to be met with incredulity, as scholarly work usually commands a lot of time to come about. To our surprise, most of our initial invitations to prospective collaborators were received with massive enthusiasm. After that, every single contributor who said yes came through. They each provided us with strong, thoughtful contributions—and everyone submitted them on time. That many did so despite travelling, while preparing grant proposals or grading essays, dealing with family obligations and, in a couple of cases, coping with some emergency situations, speaks to the professionalism and commitment of the participants in this innovative project.

From the start, UBC Press, the publisher of the book series Communication, Strategy and Politics, showed similar excitement with the project, immediately committing to the very short 10-day production schedule and

to making the compilation available open-access. This is extraordinary in academic publishing, and we are extremely grateful to the entire editorial and production team at UBC Press for their unwavering support and dedication in making the project come to fruition, in particular the organizational wizardry of Laraine Coates, along with Emily Andrew, Melissa Pitts and the talents of layout designers Alexa Love and Shyla Seller. Samara Canada is likewise an enthusiastic and exemplary partner. We thank Kendall Anderson, Laura Anthony, Jane Hilderman, Jennifer Phillips, and Emily Walker at Samara for making the contributions even more accessible as a blog and for generally getting the word out beyond the confines of academia.

We felt that writing about the election in such a timely manner was important for a number of reasons. To our knowledge nothing like it existed or had been tried before in Canada. It brings together a strong collection of essays, reflections and analyses on events that just happened, and captures details while they are still fresh in contributors' minds. It is a potential source of information for researchers who will be preparing deeper analysis. It complements the important contributions that other colleagues will assemble and publish in the coming months and years, for instance after analyzing large electoral datasets. It is freely accessible for use by students and teachers in a timely manner. Perhaps most importantly, it seeks to connect Canadian citizens with a variety of non-partisan perspectives about Canadian democracy.

This assortment of immediate impressions about the 2015 Canadian federal election is a clear demonstration that Canadian scholars and practitioners can provide insightful, concise, and useful analysis in a swift and efficient manner. Ours was an insane idea that talented contributors and partners turned into a dream project. We thank them all, and wish you a great read.

Election 2015: Overview

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Christopher Waddell joined Carleton in 2001 after ten years at CBC News producing *The National*. He was also the parliamentary bureau chief from 1993 to 2001, and, from 1995, the executive producer, news specials. Prior to joining the CBC, he was an economics reporter in Ottawa, the Ottawa bureau chief, an associate editor, and then the national editor, at *The Globe and Mail*. He has won two National Newspaper Awards for business reporting and CBC programs he has supervised have won six Gemini awards for television excellence. He is the editor (with David Taras) of *How Canadians Communicate: Media and Politics* (Athabasca University Press, 2012).

In the end, it wasn't close at all.

Television networks could have come on the air at 9:30 pm Eastern time on October 19 saying Canadians had voted for a Liberal government even before a single vote had been counted between Quebec and Alberta. They politely waited for a few minutes before doing just that and then, seemingly within moments, called a Liberal majority. So much for predictions of a long night of tight races ending an eleven-week campaign, during most of which opinion polls showed Liberals, Conservatives, and New Democrats all clustered around 30% support.

In hindsight, things unfolded just as anticipated. Polling in July consistently found two thirds of Canadians wanted change and two thirds of those would vote for whoever could defeat the Conservative Party. The opposition party that had the momentum by Thanksgiving (October 12) would have the advantage. That was the Liberals.

Whether voters really decided in that last week or earlier may become obvious by comparing the results of the record 3.6 million votes cast at Thanksgiving-weekend advance polls with the counts on October 19. What's harder to tell is whether Canadians voted *for* the Liberals or *against* the Conservatives. The answer to that could play a major role in the longevity of Justin Trudeau's government. What is clear is that the Liberals caught the public's current desire for change and each day of the campaign they drove home a positive message of change, one that was in contrast with the style and tone of Conservative party politics. Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver responded, where ignoring gridlock and environmental concerns seemed by-products of the cost-cutting induced by the Conservatives' balanced-budget obsession.

But the visuals were just as important as Trudeau's message. The camera loves the Liberal leader and the party used that to great effect every day, beginning with an unorthodox campaign launch at the gay pride parade in Vancouver. Playing to and off the enthusiasm of crowds in both staged and spontaneous moments, the Trudeau campaign looked different than the others in stills and video. You didn't even need sound to get it. The leader thrived on the attention and crowds reciprocated. The message was spontaneity, risk-taking, and generational change. Visually, neither Stephen Harper nor Thomas Mulcair stood a chance. Not much else they tried worked either. Was all that the result of the specific dynamics of this campaign, or perhaps it was a reflection of the broader societal changes that will force re-evaluation of basic principles of political strategy and communication?

People may not like negative advertising, but it works, is the rationale often offered. This time it failed miserably, despite millions of dollars spent primarily by the Conservatives with the NDP piling on as its hopes slipped away. Who did the ads actually reach? Certainly not younger Canadians who have no interest in cable and satellite television in their turn away from mainstream media. Four years from now more Canadians will have embraced that view. Voters in much of Canada also found the almost-universal print media endorsement of the Conservatives anachronistic bordering on ridiculous, damaging remaining media credibility.

If the Fair Elections Act was designed to discourage participation by making voting more difficult, it failed to do so. Turnout at 68.5% was the highest in two decades, from an encouragingly sharp increase in First Nations peoples

voting, possibly more young people participating, and the return of some people previously turned off politics. What appears to have succeeded, in part, was the Conservative and Bloc Québécois divisive appeals through their anti-niqab campaigns. It may have contributed, along with a split of the progressive vote between the NDP and the Liberals in a number of ridings, to the Bloc unexpectedly winning 10 seats and Conservatives more than doubling their Quebec representation to 12. Fear of Muslims may also explain the Conservatives' strength in rural Canada and their crumbling in urban centres.

For the media, a long campaign and its revenue crisis caused by the collapse of advertising forced news organizations to finally risk what they had previously lacked the courage to try—abandoning the leaders' national tours. On the planes, reporters were outnumbered by party staff. As a result, voters enjoyed a greater depth and range of news coverage from mainstream sources and online upstarts such as iPolitics, Buzzfeed, *Vice*, and the *Huffington Post*. That may have also increased turnout. Canadian politics, though, seems no closer to the transformational change social-media organizations now predict and promote with each election.

Also unsuccessful was the change in leaders' debates. The benefit to voters of having five debates was lost as online and cable audiences were small compared to the audiences for broadcast debates of past campaigns. If, however, the result of this mess is an institutionalized process for future debates that puts voters' interests first, it may have been almost worth the pain.

In electoral terms, Justin Trudeau's Canada on October 20 looks a lot like Pierre Trudeau's Canada on February 19, 1980. The Liberals dominate Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, urban centres, and immigrant communities. The Conservatives have sacrificed a decade of organizing and pandering, reduced to a narrow geographic and population base in western Canada and rural Quebec and Ontario. The New Democrats are again very much the third party. What's different is how Canadians got there.

Accepted wisdom about campaign strategy and communications was steamrollered by a demand for change in 2015. There are now four years to assess whether that was merely an aberration or evidence that politics is now ensnared in the same maelstrom that has overwhelmed the media. The enticing possibility is that the result is a reversal of what seemed to be unstoppable declines in political engagement and Canadian democracy itself.

Election 42: What Happened?

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Warren Kinsella was previously a partner at the law firm of McMillan Binch and has also worked as a consultant, journalist, and political chief of staff. From 1990 to 1993, Warren was special assistant to the Rt. Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien. He is the author of *Fight the Right* (Random House, 2012).

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In politics, as in life, the simplest explanation—while beguiling—is not always the best one. So, too, the interminable Canadian general election of 2015. No single thing can account for a change this big. Consider:

- When compared to 2011's debacle, the Liberal Party of Canada increased its share of the vote by more than 4.1 million—an improvement of 60 per cent.
- When also contrasted with 2011, the New Democratic Party shed nearly one million votes—a loss of almost 30% support.
- Many, many seats changed hands, principally benefitting the Liberals—they took nearly 90 from the Conservatives, and almost 60 from the New Democrats.

Those dramatic figures notwithstanding, Canadian voters engaged in comparison shopping in the year leading up to the election campaign, and moved around in a way that we had not seen before. At any given point, Messrs. Harper, Trudeau, or Mulcair were considered the best choice for Prime Minister—and then summarily discarded.

Why? Embracing a single, pithy explanation for it all is seductive, but it probably isn't the best way to approach an event as multifaceted as Election 2015. A few observations can be made, however, in respect to each of the parties.

First, the NDP collapsed. One million votes: that is what Jack Layton achieved in 2011, and that is what Thomas Mulcair lost in 2015. He lost those votes for a myriad of reasons. Chief among them: Mulcair did not win the debates. In an era where few voters still watch these televised contests, this should not have been fatal. But for Mulcair, it was. Ottawa-based journalists—the ones who still cling to the false notion that Question Period is relevant—were enthralled by the NDP leader's prosecutorial style in the House. They spared no glowing adjective, and predicted that Mulcair would win every campaign debate. But he did not. Pundits rather stated that Mulcair "struggled," "fell short," or "sank" in the different debates.

Another problem is that the NDP ran a low-bridge, front-runner campaign when their front-runner status was anything but certain. When an aspiring leader is always playing it safe, it gives wings to the notion that he or she is arrogant, or has a hidden agenda, or both. Paradoxically, taking no risks is in itself a risk. The NDP took none.

Finally, Mulcair embraced the losing electoral strategy of Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath and Toronto mayoral candidate Olivia Chow: he moved to the ideological right. On deficits, on defence, on virtually any issue, the New Democrat leader didn't sound like a traditional New Democrat. In his mad dash to get to the centre, he left behind his bewildered core vote, who accordingly wandered over to the more-progressive Trudeau Liberals.

Second, the Conservatives faced a "Harper-endum." In the days since Election 42, it has become conventional wisdom that the entire result can be reduced to a single cause: namely, that many voted to get rid of Stephen Harper.

As mesmerizing as this rationalization may be, it doesn't hold up to scrutiny. The numbers tell the tale: the Conservative Party shed only 50,000 votes between 2011 and 2015. In percentage terms, they dropped by less than a single point. That is all.

While many Canadians may have professed to detest the departing

Prime Minister, his core vote does not. Through serial scandals and policy controversies, the one-third of Canadians who self-identify as Conservative did not give up on their man. Unlike progressive voters—who are highly promiscuous and flit, butterfly-like, between the Liberals, the New Democrats, and the Greens—the Conservative bedrock remained with Stephen Harper.

Harper's principal problem was that he was a prime minister who had been in power for a decade—and every prime minister becomes unpopular after a decade. Harper had held onto his loyalists, but he could not acquire new ones. In Election 2015, poll after poll registered the same result: only a miniscule number of voters indicated that the Conservative Party was their second choice. To win again, Harper needed to grow his vote by six or seven more percentage points. But he could not, and it ended his decade.

And third, the Liberals undersold, but overperformed. Justin Trudeau won mostly because he adopted Jean Chretien's well-known maxim: undersell and overperform. In this regard, the Liberal leader was greatly assisted by his opponents. Their research had clearly shown them that Trudeau was seen by the electorate as too young and too inexperienced, and therefore a risk. The New Democrats and the Conservatives accordingly spent millions on ads to exploit this vulnerability.

In one extraordinary bit of political symmetry, the Tories and the Dippers came up with nearly-identical anti-Trudeau ad campaigns in virtually the same week in August. Just prior to the dropping of the writ, the Conservatives commenced aggressively promoting their ubiquitous "just not ready" theme about Trudeau—and the New Democrats debuted advertising stating that "Justin Trudeau just isn't up to the job."

The CPC and the NDP didn't land on the same strategy by chance: their quantitative and qualitative findings had shown them it would hurt Trudeau. And, for a time, it did.

The attacks produced an unexpected result, however. They lowered expectations about him so low that he could not help but exceed them. In debates, in media encounters, at rallies, and on the hustings, Trudeau did far better than anyone had been led to believe he would. The campaign, which went on for week after interminable week, assisted him, too: he literally grew as a candidate within it. The Trudeau who started the campaign was not the one who ended it.

Those, in the end, are the three most plausible explanations for what happened in Election 2015. The NDP tried to be something they weren't; the Conservatives could not acquire new friends; and the Liberals were grossly underestimated.

There is no single, simple reason for the result in Election 2015. But, for our purposes, three will suffice.

Note: An earlier version of this piece appeared in *The Hill Times*, October 26, 2015.

The End of the Harper Dynasty

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Lawrence LeDuc's recent publications include *Comparing Democracies 4* (with Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris) and *Dynasties and Interludes: Past and Present in Canadian Electoral Politics* (with Jon H. Pammett, Judith I. McKenzie, and André Turcotte), and "The Federal Election in Canada: May 2011," *Electoral Studies* 31 (2012). In 2015, Professor LeDuc received the Mildred A. Schwartz lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Politics Section of the American Political Science Association.

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A fourth election victory would have placed Stephen Harper firmly among Canada's longest enduring and most electorally successful leaders. But the "Harper dynasty," as we have described it elsewhere (LeDuc et al. 2016), ended decisively in the election of October 19, 2015. The Harper Conservatives were defeated largely because of their failure to manage three fundamental issue areas that have long been the key to sustained electoral success in Canada. Contributing to their defeat was the successful repositioning of the Trudeau Liberals as the principal alternative following the decline in support for the Mulcair NDP over the course of the campaign. This dynamic substantially reduced the probability of three-way vote splits at the constituency level that might have treated the Conservatives more favourably. While Trudeau "won" and Harper "lost" are both reasonable interpretations of the 2015 election outcome, I will place the emphasis here on the latter.

Canadian electoral politics presents a puzzle that has long intrigued scholars. A volatile electorate can often bring about sudden and dramatic shifts in electoral fortunes. Yet successful parties and their leaders have frequently been able to hold on to power for substantial periods of time. These "dynasties" create the illusion of a dominant political alignment, but sustaining these over time has never been an easy task in the Canadian political environment. They have sometimes ended in defeat or been interrupted by short, sharp interludes. It is never possible to identify a true dynasty until it has been tested in multiple elections. Harper's first such test in 2008 was successful but inconclusive. The shape and potential durability of his dynasty did not become clear until the majority victory of the Conservatives in 2011.

The Harper Conservatives came to power in 2006 in the wake of the sponsorship scandal that had engulfed the Liberals. Their 2006 victory was fashioned, not by "uniting the right" as was often asserted, but by positioning the newly merged party closer to the centre of the ideological spectrum and appealing to interests outside of its more secure western base. Promising increased spending on health care and a reduction in the GST, the Conservatives in power also initiated a number of targeted "pocketbook" programs. The economic stimulus package brought in belatedly in response to the deepening economic crisis of 2008-09 (the "Economic Action Plan") became the centerpiece of the government's economic policy. The Conservatives repeatedly asserted their competence in managing the economy and offered assurances that a Harper-led government would continue to pursue lower taxes, job creation, and (in the longer term) balanced budgets. Combined with aggressive attacks on its opponents, these strategies were successful in producing a majority in 2011. However, like the Chrétien/Martin dynasty that preceded it, the Harper dynasty also depended heavily on a divided opposition to remain in power.

The keys to maintaining a dynasty have essentially been to be well positioned on the major economic issues of the time; to successfully manage the social, linguistic and regional divisions of the country; and (in modern times) to sustain the essential elements of the welfare state. In their three successful campaigns, the Harper Conservatives held at least some strengths in each of these areas. By the time of the 2015 election however,

they displayed significant weaknesses in all three of these core issue areas. Although all parties in 2015 promised continued support for health care, the Conservatives' commitment in this area was compromised by its quest for balanced budgets. The party's Quebec strategy was largely unsuccessful after 2006, and they likewise failed to build on the 2011 breakthrough in urban areas such as Toronto. The embrace of divisive "wedge" issues did not help. And, finally, the claim of greater economic competence no longer appeared entirely credible. With collapsing oil prices and a falling dollar in the background, the 2015 election campaign began with a debate over whether the Canadian economy has already tipped once again into conditions of recession.

It is too soon to assess the potential of the Trudeau Liberals to establish a new dynasty, or of the Conservatives under a new leader to challenge them. Dramatic election victories, often magnified by our first-past-the-post electoral system, do not reliably forecast future success. With a substantially dealigned electorate, Canadian parties and leaders must regularly be prepared to reposition themselves and to navigate through problems that arise in each of the three core issue areas. The leader is a critical element in this process. Politically successful leaders in Canada are not necessarily charismatic figures, although they might be. But in the longer term, they are more likely to be skillful and pragmatic politicians, who understand the fundamental elements of Canadian politics and society and can adapt effectively to new and unforeseen challenges.

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Democratic Reform: From Campaign Promise to Policy Change

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The 2015 election ended a majority Conservative government that practiced disciplined message control in its communications, centralized decision-making, and a strategic approach to legislation and policymaking. Ordinary members of parliament found themselves under the control of party leaders, with little room for independent action. Moreover, the public impression was that Prime Minister Stephen Harper chose to govern single-mindedly on behalf of his electoral base, which represented slightly under 40% of the electorate. This alienated a large number of voters, for whom change in government became the top issue in the 2015 election.

Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau promised a different style of leadership. More than the other leaders (except Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party), Trudeau and his party accepted and responded to complaints about the dysfunction of the democratic system. Specifically, they promised no omnibus bills or prorogation; less centralized decision-making in the PMO; more free votes; more openness in parliament; more accountability in Question Period; a more effective Speaker of the House; election of committee chairs by secret ballot; more independence for the Parliamentary Budget Officer; a ban on government ads; more transparency in Supreme Court and other appointments; parliamentary oversight of CSIS, Canada's spy agency; repeal of parts of Fair Elections Act; senate reform; and electoral reform.

Many of the changes outlined in the Liberal Party platform could be implemented unilaterally and without difficult negotiations. But caution is in order on the subject of political reform. Opposition parties tend to talk enthusiastically about democratic reform while in opposition, yet rarely deliver once in government. There is one democratic reform, in particular, in which perverse incentives may kick in—electoral reform.

The Liberal Party directly benefited from the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. The 42nd parliament offers another example of what Peter H. Russell (2008: 5-6) calls a "false majority" government. Liberal candidates won less than 40% of the vote, yet they captured 54% of the seats. If seats were allocated in proportion to votes, the Liberals would have won something like 135 seats rather than 184. Other major parties would have seen increases, most notably the New Democratic Party (NDP) which would have garnered between 65-70 rather than 44 seats, and the Greens which would have secured approximately 13 seats instead of just May's. A minority government or coalition would have been inevitable.

The Liberals also indirectly benefited from the FPTP system. The collapse of the NDP was partly an effect of the electoral system. Voters who wanted to remove Prime Minister Harper were prepared to rally behind the most promising agent of change. In the course of the campaign, as it became clear that the Liberal Party had the best shot at unseating the Conservatives, a bandwagon began to form behind the Trudeau Liberals.

Having benefitted from the status quo, will the Liberal Party deliver on the promise of electoral reform? A majority in parliament gives the Liberals the means to effect change, but paradoxically may diminish their motivation. That said, immediately after the election Trudeau re-committed himself to an all-party committee to review the electoral system. Making cross-partisan use of committees is

consistent with the larger goal of making parliament work more effectively. A challenge for such a committee, however, will be to reach agreement among parties that are likely to advocate reforms that benefit their own party's narrower interests.

One solution would be to remove deliberation over the electoral system from the partisan arena. A citizens' assembly, like the one created in British Columbia in 2004-05, could generate a reform proposal that would not be motivated by partisan gain. A referendum on such a proposal (with a 50% plus one threshold to prevent a minority from thwarting the will of the majority) could help ensure that the result of its deliberations could not simply be ignored. In the end, of course, any proposal would have to be approved by parliament and enjoy broad support in public opinion.

On balance, the result of the 2015 was positive for Canadian democracy. It brought an end to the term of a Prime Minister who often clashed with Canada's democratic institutions and conventions, and elevated to high office a new leader committed to an ambitious agenda of democratic renewal. How far the Trudeau government will persist in this agenda is impossible to know in advance. Given the incentives and interests that confront any party as it moves from opposition to government, there are grounds for caution as well as optimism.

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Partisans and Elections: Electoral Reform is for Parliament to Address

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Robert P. Shepherd's research focuses on the effectiveness of evaluation functions in government, ethics, and public management reforms. His most recent publications examine politicization of public services in Canada, take a comparative look at federal and provincial lobbying regimes, and investigate the potential for external evaluation functions within the Canadian system of government. A recent publication is "How Ottawa Reforms: Improving Democracy, or Keeping up Appearances," in G. Bruce Doern and Christopher Stoney (Eds.), *How Ottawa Spends 2015/16* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

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Over a year before Election 2015, former Auditor General of Canada Sheila Fraser expressed concern about the ramifications of the Fair Elections Act arguing, "Elections are the base of our democracy, and if we do not have a truly independent body, it really is an attack on our democracy and we should all be concerned about that" (CBC 2014). Fraser points to two core elements of any electoral process: fairness and inclusivity. In essence, if there was any process that ought to be rigorously protected under our rule of law, it is the electoral process.

Bill C-23, titled the Fair Elections Act came into force on June 19 2014 under controversy not only for its questionable intentions, but because its rationale and the process by which it came about was contrary to convention. Given investigations into questionable election expenses and breaking spending limits (2006), the "in and out scandal" whereby $1.3 million was allegedly moved in and out of sixty-seven federal ridings to pay for national advertising (2011), and investigations by Elections Canada auditors regarding misleading robocalls (2011), the Conservative Party believed it was under siege, and that the authorities of Elections Canada had to be reviewed.

That a government has a right to propose solutions to problems, perceived or real, is not an issue. However, there is a longstanding convention in Canada over electoral reform that all parties must agree on the problem and process of repair, including proposing legislative amendments that affect questions of electoral system fairness. For example, Parliament often would agree to appoint independent electoral commissions to work through financing rules, and how advance polls will work and be scrutinized, and to agree on electoral boundaries. Somewhere in the early 2000s federal parties stopped working together on these issues, and governments in power reformed electoral rules unilaterally. This is worrisome because it suggests that there is no agreed or consistent process for changing rules in the future: the process is set by the majority party.

It is no stretch to imagine then that any electoral rule changes under this model will likely benefit the party in power, and the Fair Elections Act is no exception. One question of fairness involves limiting the voting franchise itself. A major "problem" highlighted in the Act regards voter identity. Under s. 143, the voter information card is no longer enough: voters are required to produce two documents as proof of identity and address. Concerns about this requirement include that it places some groups at a disadvantage, such as some Indigenous peoples living on reserves, or homeless people, or some elderly individuals where an address on more than one piece of identification may not be available. Likewise, students living away from home during the election may have identification with their home address rather than that of the riding in which they reside currently. In addition, approximately 600,000 persons are typically in the process of moving at any given time, and cannot prove their address until settled. With respect to identity, the requirement places some individuals such as trans-gendered, transitioning, or transvestite persons at a disadvantage as their identification may not represent them. As such, they may feel compelled to avoid voting altogether.

In addition, the Ontario Court of Appeal upheld federal voting restrictions in July 2015 that prevent expatriates from voting who have lived outside Canada for more than five years.

Elections Canada estimates there are over one million former residents who fall into this category.

From an institutional perspective, the *Act* separates the responsibility for managing the election from regulating elections practices. All prosecution of breaches under the Elections Act is now handled by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), an office under the direction of the Executive Branch. The question arises as to whether the DPP is better positioned to house and prosecute matters of electoral law than an independent agent of Parliament. Even intuitively, it stands to reason that the governing party that can exercise influence over executive branch agents would be able to make its preferences well known to the DPP.

At present, it can be argued the electoral reform process is highly charged and politicized. Under the *Act*, obstacles for prosecution can be put in the way of independent agents of Parliament to do their jobs. Cabinet can influence whether enforcement of election laws occurs. And rules can be changed to limit the voting franchise by virtue of a majority vote in Parliament. Although not exhaustive, these several problems raise concerns about the cohesion of the current law and the process by which it is arrived at, thereby leaving it open to manipulation. In essence, enforcing the rule of law becomes suspect.

The "rule of politics" over "rule of law" should be a concern to all Canadians. Fairness demands a review of the Fair Elections Act, and a repeal of those sections that cannot be substantiated with evidence of wrongdoing. As Sheila Fraser rightly concluded, "When you look at the people who may not be able to vote, when you look at the limitations that are being put on the Chief Electoral Officer, when you see the operational difficulties that are going to be created in all this, I think it's going to be very difficult to have a fair, a truly fair, election" (CBC 2014).

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Data-Driven Microtargeting in the 2015 General Election

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If there was any doubt left, the 2015 general election campaign confirmed the arrival of the era of database politics in Canada. All of the country's major parties now rely on massive databases, data analytics and predictive modeling, and data-driven microtargeting to maximize their opportunities for electoral success. More than ever before, parties are able to derive intelligence on the electorate from polling and data mining, and this research informs party strategy, including the crafting of messages that are likely to win the support of key segments of the electorate. But, Canadian political parties have also built their own voter databases, sometimes called voter management systems. These databases are used to identify those individuals who are likely supporters or could be persuaded to become supporters. The process of using targeted communication, designed to influence and mobilize identified voters is known as microtargeting.

The backbone of party databases is the electronic voters list—containing the name, address, gender, and date of birth of each eligible voter—provided by Elections Canada. The parties merge this list with their membership and donor records, and then employ a range of techniques to gather and input information on voters' cultural background, occupation, policy concerns, and more. The Conservatives led the pack with the development of their database, the Constituent Information Management System (CIMS), in 2004. In the 2006 and 2008 general election the CIMS database was effectively employed in battleground constituencies where centrally coordinated voter contact programs were used to identify and get supporters to the polls.

By 2011 all three major parties had roughly similar databases, but the Conservative database contained considerably more personal information on voters, and it was employed most effectively. Thus, as they prepared for the 2015 election, the New Democratic Party and the Liberals overhauled their databases, known as Populus and Liberalist, and invested heavily in training local campaign teams to collect and employ data in voter persuasion and mobilization. Both parties developed in-house analytics operations, with the Liberals spending three times what they had invested in data and data analytics in 2011.

As an illustration, the Liberal Party's 2015 central analytics team employed their research to develop a predictive model that identified the personal characteristics of voters who were, first, highly likely to vote and, second, highly likely to vote Liberal. The analytics team employed this model to construct a six-tier ranking system that guided the voter identification and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts of local campaigns. In one Alberta-based battleground constituency the local campaign team found that there was a 60% chance that a visit or telephone call to a tier-one voter would result in the campaign identifying a supporter who they would want to mobilize on election day. The corresponding results for tier two and three were in the 35-40% range, and numbers dropped off after that. Thus, the decision was made to focus the canvass campaign on households with tier one through three voters.

Using an app designed for smart phones and tablets, Liberal canvassers were provided with the addresses (or telephone numbers) of the tier one through three voters they were to contact. After speaking with the voter, the canvasser would then use this app to input information about this voter, including whether or not they indicat-

ed support for the Liberal candidate. Once uploaded to the central Liberalist database, this information would be available to guide future communication with that voter.

The Liberalist software's functionality includes a capacity to generate letters to be mailed to voters or send email or text blasts to specific groups of voters. Most campaigns used these functions to intensify their GOTV activities, but they were also used for fundraising and persuasion. Canvassers in some local campaigns were armed with a variety of centrally produced issue cards, and information extracted from Liberalist determined which card they would leave with the voter.

Although Canada's parties are still learning how to make the most of their databases and voter management software, there is no doubt that microtargeting has made for more efficient GTOV efforts, and even influenced the results in some battleground constituencies. As the scope and detail of the information in databases expands, and parties become more proficient at employing microtargeting in voter persuasion, highly personalized targeted campaign messages will rival the importance of the messaging of the national campaign and party leader tours. This will make campaign communications less and less transparent. In fact, data-driven microtargeting shifts the focus of partisan campaigns from the work of public persuasion and the building of a national consensus toward what could be described as manipulative exercises in private persuasion. Concerns have also been raised about the fact that party databases are not governed by either of Canada's two core privacy laws. The loss of transparency, the manipulative character of targeted persuasion, and privacy concerns suggest data-driven microtargeting is not making a positive contribution to Canadian democracy.

Political Parties, Campaigns, Data, and Privacy

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Canada has just passed through another election contest in which the three main political parties have relied on extensive databases containing sensitive personal information on the social backgrounds of supporters and voters in general, including what issues are important to them and whether they might be persuaded to vote for a particular party.

All parties use predictive analytics based on mathematical algorithms and statistical methodologies to discern voter intentions. On this basis they craft messages targeted at both broad and narrow segments of the voting population. The analysis is used by central campaign operations but it is also shared with candidates, political staff, and volunteers at the constituency level. The data is communicated in digital and non-digital formats and many of the people who handle it are not well informed about privacy law.

Since 1997 Elections Canada has assigned voters a unique identification number and this eight-digit ID is shared with parties, along with names, addresses, and gender. In past elections parties gathered information on who voted and who did not through a labour intensive process of having volunteers collect so-called "bingo cards" at thousands of polling stations. For the convenience of the parties and against warnings from the CEO of Elections Canada about its privacy implications, a provision in the Fair Elections Act (2014) now requires Elections Canada to inform the parties which registered voters have cast a ballot and which have not. This change will further enable parties to develop their databases and could encourage them to ignore non-voters who are not inclined to support them.

All parties supplement the basic information from Elections Canada in their databases with additional contents from the census, polling, focus groups, retail marketing surveys, geo- and psycho-demographic research purchased from commercial firms, constituency-level information provided by volunteers, and the trails left by people using social media like Facebook and Twitter.

Of the three main parties, the Conservative Party of Canada was the first to exploit the advantages of data collection to identify and target their supporters using the Conservative Information Management System (CIMS). Rushing to make up for lost time, both the Liberal Party (Liberalist) and the NDP (Populous) have in recent years refined their voter management systems. While all parties are reluctant to share much detail about those systems, available evidence suggests there is close to parity among them today. With the incentive of remaining competitive, and as technology advances, all parties will continue to expand their reach into the private lives of Canadians and privacy regulation in the political domain will become more difficult.

Because political parties do not engage in commercial activity, they are not subject to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). Nor are they subject to the Privacy Act that applies to the public sector at the national level.

The websites for all three parties contain privacy policy statements that claim they will respect privacy principles and identify a privacy officer who will deal with voter concerns. Parties also maintain that the databases have become an indispensible tool to identify, inform, and mobilize, voters, thereby enhancing electoral democracy.

It is easy to understand then why parties want to protect the freedom to collect and use personal information, but their shared self-interest should not trump the public interest that requires they be brought within the scope of the privacy laws. It is wrong that citizens do not have a legal right to give informed consent to the collection of certain information about them, to see it, to control its distribution, nor to modify or remove it from parties' databases.

Technological breakdowns, human error, and abuses to gain political advantage mean that there have already been recorded breeches of privacy by parties and candidates and more are likely to happen in the future. Complaints about privacy violations should be reviewed and resolved by the independent officer of Parliament called the Privacy Commissioner, not by the parties themselves.

There was no talk during the election of amending PIPEDA to make political parties, like most other institutions within society, subject to its provisions. The Liberals did offer a package of democratic reforms and with a solid majority as well as promises of a more consultative governing style, one might hope the new government would open discussions with opposition parties and Canadians about how best to uphold their privacy rights in the political field, whether this involved an all-party code of conduct to follow the privacy rules or actual amendments to law.

The Permanent Campaign Meets the 78-day Campaign, and Falls Apart

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Pegging the start of an election period in the era of the permanent campaign might be a fool's errand, but the race that ended October 19 probably started in earnest 354 days before voting day. That's when Stephen Harper announced his expanded Universal Child Care Benefit and income splitting for families. The announcement was the main feature of the 2015 budget in April and the party's central campaign plank. And though the increased amount in those monthly cheques to families went into effect in January 2015, the first payments didn't go out until July 20, making for a retroactive lump three months before election day—"Christmas in July," as Minister Pierre Poilievre unsubtly declared.

Though it followed four years of majority government, the 2015 election combined at least three new elements of the permanent campaign at the federal level. For starters, it was the first fixed-date election. Doubts remained that the Conservatives would go earlier but the parties could still more or less plan with October 19, 2015 in mind. The second was the end of the per-vote subsidy: there would be no taxpayer money propping up party balance sheets going into the campaign, and no windfall afterwards to refill coffers, so identifying supporters and soliciting donations was never more important.

The third was a move to even more brazen government advertising and stunts to promote programs. Public servants worked overtime on a Sunday in May to film Mr. Poilievre glad-handing constituents and explaining Conservative tax breaks for a government YouTube video; at the end of June, he was in Winnipeg to watch the cheques roll off the printer before they were sent in the mail. The climax was billions in government spending announcements across the country in the month before the election was called. Since coming to office in 2006, the Conservative government spent more than $693-million on advertising, according to Public Works reports, from 2006-07 to 2013-14, the most recent figure available. Documents showed the government planned to spend $13.5 million on post-2015 budget promotional advertising on the family tax cuts, mostly during the NHL playoffs.

While the Conservatives benefited from the government apparatus to take full advantage of the pre-election period, the other parties weren't waiting either. Tom Mulcair announced one of the NDP's major policy planks—$15-a-day child care—a couple of weeks ahead of the Conservative tax cuts last year; Justin Trudeau was out with his own variation on the child tax benefit and democratic reform proposal long before the campaign. The tables below show the extent to which the parties were advertising, fundraising, and polling between elections.

The Conservatives offered few major policy announcements once the official campaign was underway. There is some irony that the party that arguably invented the permanent campaign in Canada, and appeared to be using it to its advantage, may have diminished that edge by calling a 78-day election campaign. There are three principal reasons for that decision: they could outspend their opponents; they would head off third-party advertising against them by subjecting it to election spending limits; and they would give their opponents, particularly Trudeau, more opportunities to stumble. It didn't work out as planned. The idea of the permanent campaign is to do the hard work in advance so that reinforcing the brand is the primary task of the

actual campaign. But the campaign was so long that events to which the Conservatives had to respond intervened throughout, and there was no major policy plank to win back the narrative.

The campaign's length also managed to undo the investment in negative advertising about the Liberal leader. Trudeau's momentum built slowly, over the course of 11 weeks and five leaders' debates, peaking just in time for voting day. Would Conservative framing, particularly from its "Just Not Ready" ads, have held up better in a 37-day campaign? All parties will want to study the interplay of the permanent campaign and the actual campaign in 2015, and determine new schedules for framing and policy rollouts that don't undermine them when it matters most.

The permanent campaign is unlikely to go away, despite another majority government. All parties were using more sophisticated tools at the door while canvassing; they won't waste the data gleaned from those millions of knocks, and the opportunity to turn it into targeted fundraising. But the Liberal win also brings the promise of regulatory change that would undermine the permanent campaign. The party promised to end partisan government advertising by appointing a commissioner to ensure neutral ads. More importantly, they promised to limit party spending between elections. If implemented, those moves would hamper future governments' ability to use the levers of power for partisan gain and to turn a fundraising advantage into a real advantage between elections.

Party spending on campaign-related activities, 2012-2014

Conservatives

Year	Advertising	Fundraising	Polling
2012	$1,424,231	$64,197	$219,478
2013	$1,567,575	$5,440,134	$280,805
2014	$2,525,243	$5,875,287	$358,422

Liberals

Year	Advertising	Fundraising	Polling
2012	$44,602	$1,690,365	$104,885
2013	$1,646,563	$2,983,612	$121,010
2014	$1,784,790	$1,782,000	$242,932

NDP

Year	Advertising	Fundraising	Polling
2012	$1,924,265	$3,574,613	$118,619
2013	$200,087	$2,829,759	$140,807
2014	$196,352	$2,049,348	$372,254

Source: Elections Canada

Party Fundraising, 2012-2014

Party	Year	Amount Raised	Number of contributors
Conservatives	2012	$17,258,098.41	87,153
Conservatives	2013	$18,100,956.42	80,135
Conservatives	2014	$20,113,303.63	91,736

Party	Year	Amount Raised	Number of contributors
Liberals	2012	$8,166,657.76	44,466
Liberals	2013	$11,292,845.85	71,655
Liberals	2014	$15,063,142.28	77,064

Party	Year	Amount Raised	Number of contributors
NDP	2012	$7,670,748.71	43,537
NDP	2013	$8,162,309.02	39,218
NDP	2014	$9,527,136.75	46,355

Source: Elections Canada

The Long March to the Ballot Box 2015: Voter Fatigue or Enhanced Engagement?

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When the writs were issued on August 4 for a vote on October 19, Canadians were subjected to the longest election campaign in modern history. This was a clear departure from recent practice, but, perhaps, not surprising in this era of continual campaigning.

In its 1991 report, "Reforming Electoral Democracy," the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (Lortie Commission) observed that "one of the strongest messages we received at our hearings was that Canadian election campaigns are too long" (Canada, 1991: 77). Intervenors at public hearings cited voter fatigue, stress on volunteers, and the financial costs of campaigning and election administration. Citing advances in communication and transportation, the Commission recommended a campaign period of 40 to 47 days, noting that a permanent voters list would end time-consuming door-to-door enumeration (voter registration). The subsequent amendment to the Canada Elections Act in 1997 set the minimum at 36 days with no maximum.

The 1997 amendment did not alter party and candidate spending limits, without regard to campaign length, an obvious disincentive for lengthening the campaign. In rejecting a maximum length, Parliament opened the door for Bill C-23 (2014) that increased the party- and candidate-spending limit by establishing a daily rate and adding that amount for each day of the campaign beyond the 36-day minimum. Since the 11-week campaign was more than twice the minimum length, the party and candidate spending limits more than doubled, to around $50 million for a registered party running candidates in all 338 ridings. It seems likely that the Conservatives expected the long campaign to be to their advantage.

Some argued that, given the advent of the "permanent campaign," in which political parties remain on campaign footing while in government, an elongated formal campaign would not make much difference. In fact, however, there are important differences. First, the formal campaign is tightly regulated, with limits on party and candidate spending, and on advertising by third parties (anyone other than parties and candidates who intend to spend more than $10,000 on advertising). It seems clear that the Conservative Party wished in particular to limit third-party advertising, since union-funded advertising had been effective in defeating their provincial counterparts in the two most recent Ontario elections. In fact, the campaign focused primarily on the parties and their leaders; partisan advertising from third parties was quite limited.

Second, the long campaign appears to have registered differently with voters than non-election political marketing. Because an actual election gives voters the opportunity to make a choice at the ballot box, many appear to have tuned into the campaign discourse when they were ready and tuned out when they had made up their minds. Even though many voters appeared to experience campaign ennui, turnout increased from 61.1% in 2011 to 68.5%, the highest result since 1993. The highly competitive campaign, with the three major parties closely bunched in most voter preference polls, was undoubtedly a factor, along with the strongly held desire for a change of government, cited by 28% as their main reason for voting in the Forum Research post-election poll. On the other hand, perhaps many of those more than three million citizens who voted in the advance polls (up 71% from 2011) were not only registering a choice but also saying "enough

already!" The Forum Research post-election poll found that by the middle of the campaign, 58% of voters had already made their vote decision. Nevertheless, the early election call clearly facilitated an unprecedented range of get-out-the-vote campaigns in many communities, especially First Nations, and provided more time for strategic voting campaigns to make their case against the Harper government. It seems clear that a wider range of issues than usual in shorter campaigns became part of the general electoral discourse and that voters were offered more opportunities to cast an informed vote. The fact that most voters appear to have voted on the basis of "vision and values rather than specific policies" indicates that many distilled particular issues into larger visions.

The long campaign of 2015 did cost considerably more than recent campaigns, but, arguably, the benefit to voters was worth the price. In most constituencies, the ground campaigning, with sign distribution, robocalls, and door knocking did not start until a few weeks before the vote and volunteer involvement seems to have been unaffected. News coverage included a wider range of issues and pollsters offered more than party preference analysis. In the end, a majority of voters tuned in and, in many cases, turned out.

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The 2015 Election and the Canadian Party System

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When Marty McFly and Doc Brown returned to the future two days after the 2015 election, they must have been struck by how little had changed. The prime minister designate is a Quebecker with an English-Canadian manner. His Liberal party has broad representation from all provinces and territories. The prospective cabinet promises to be a strong cast. Moreover, Justin Trudeau evokes memories that go further back, to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, famous for his "sunny ways" and genius at compromise. The shade of André Siegfried, the French political writer, is probably looking on approvingly.

Of course, not all is exactly as before. Although the New Democratic Party experienced a serious setback, it is still stronger than in most earlier decades, especially in Quebec. Although Quebec was critical to the Liberals winning an outright majority, it occurred so in ways that would puzzle a time-traveller from the 1950s. It was true then and remained true until 1993 that Quebec was the pivot for government. That province's seats came *en bloc* and went only to one or the other of the historically major parties, usually the Liberals. For the Liberals, winning that bloc was the necessary and sufficient condition for winning in the country as a whole. Failure to win the bloc would hand the election to the Conservatives. From 1993 to 2011, however, Quebec effectively opted out of the government-formation game. In 2011 and 2015 Quebec rejoined the federalist enterprise, but to back the wrong horse in 2011 and to back the right one in 2015 through fragmentation of the vote, not its consolidation.

In sum, the Liberals continue to be one of the world's most resilient political parties, and some of this may be self-fulfilling. The "brand" remains strong: notwithstanding the debacle of 2011, the Liberals emerged from that campaign with a clear edge over the NDP in party identification. According to the post-election wave of 2011 Canadian Election Study, about one respondent in four identified with the Liberal Party; for the New Democrats, the share was one in six. On the eve of the 2011 election, in spite of the polls and in spite of the shift in CES respondents' own intentions, more respondents expected a Liberal victory than an NDP one (although few expected either party to win).

Some of the resilience may be organizational. If some Liberal moves had the whiff of desperation, many seemed smart and forward-looking. For the leadership race in 2012-13, for instance, the bar for *de facto* participation was set very low; it sufficed to declare oneself a "supporter." The gamble was that the mere fact of making the declaration would induce further psychological processes of identification and motivated cognition. The platform, including the elements revealed during the campaign, always seemed thought through. Cumulatively, the platform addressed what was arguably the party's abiding weakness: its relative centrism. If this seems paradoxical, consider the empirics of party positioning in other Westminster democracies and in the United States. Political parties may feel the pull of the centre, but major parties do not start there. Rather, competition is between flanking parties; centrists get squeezed. Historically, the ability of the Liberals to avoid such a squeeze reflected their strength in Quebec, at least as the most credible federalist party. After 2011, even that seemed to be forfeit. In 2015, however, the Liberals outflanked the NDP in at least three ways: progressivity in personal

income tax, in deficit spending, and in defence in ditching the F-35.

The Liberals may benefit from a trend in the Westminster world. Even though the progressive alternative is usually a party of organized labour, such parties have shed much of the associated policy baggage; labour parties look a lot like the Liberal Party of Canada. This reflects the weakening of the union movement and emptying out of traditional manual occupations. In Canada, prohibition on financial contributions from unions (as well from corporations) may have further weakened the link. Meanwhile, the *lack* of the union link may enhance Liberals' appeal to young voters.

Finally, history suggests that when the electorate polarizes, the Liberals are the beneficiary. In 1988, Liberal leader John Turner commanded the high ground of opposition to the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement. As voters resolved to banish the Progressive Conservatives in 1993, they flocked to the Liberals even before the campaign began. In 2011, defeat of the Conservatives was not an overarching objective. In 2015 it was.

La campagne du Bloc québécois. Quand on n'a rien à perdre…

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Quand on a rien perdre, on dit, à l'instar du slogan officiel du Bloc québécois pour l'élection de 2015, que l'«On a tout à gagner». Et, stratégiquement, le parti indépendantiste a véritablement tout tenté pour assurer sa survie. Cantonné à la quatrième place des intentions de vote dans plusieurs sondages préélectoraux et délaissé par les médias au cours des premières semaines de campagne, le Bloc se devait de secouer en profondeur l'échiquier politique fédéral québécois afin de retrouver une visibilité médiatique, et ainsi un semblant d'existence, auprès des électeurs. Et c'est le 18 septembre, par le biais d'une publicité choc, que le Bloc réussira son coup.

Il faut toutefois remonter au 10 juin 2015 pour assister au début de l'opération sauvetage organisée par les stratèges bloquistes. Leur premier coup fumant consiste alors à convaincre leur chef, Mario Beaulieu, de céder sa place à l'ancien leader de la formation, Gilles Duceppe. Ce retour de Duceppe à la tête de l'organisation vise à stimuler les appuis du parti dans l'opinion publique et à réimposer le Bloc dans l'espace médiatique comme force politique réelle à l'approche de la campagne fédérale.

Cette première étape porte ses fruits, puisqu'un «effet Duceppe» se fera sentir dès les premiers jours de l'annonce de la passation du pouvoir alors que le Bloc est crédité de la deuxième place dans les sondages, derrière le NPD, toujours en tête au Québec. Le NPD et le Bloc se font la lutte pour l'électorat québécois francophone nationaliste et progressiste. Dès lors, l'objectif de la campagne bloquiste est fixé : reconquérir les nationalistes et les indépendantistes progressistes québécois qui ont voté NPD en 2011.

Néanmoins, l'effet Duceppe s'estompe pendant les vacances estivales. Lors du déclenchement de l'élection le 2 août, le parti retombe dans les intentions de votes et sa campagne n'attire pas l'attention des médias. Le parti maintient néanmoins le cap sur l'objectif de reconquête de l'électorat du NPD. Toute la communication électorale y sera largement consacrée : des (trop) nombreux slogans (*Signe de fierté; Qui prend pays, prend parti; Le Québec revient en force*), aux choix des enjeux mis en avant, aux déclarations du chef et aux publicités électorales. Le Bloc n'a qu'une seule cible pendant 78 jours : Tom Mulcair et les députés néo-démocrates du Québec, associés à un « Bloc canadien ».

Lentement, mais sûrement, la campagne bloquiste gagne en force au retour du congé de la Fête du travail. C'est toutefois le 18 septembre que le Bloc porte le coup marquant de sa campagne. Le parti lance sa première publicité électorale qui attaque de plein fouet les positions du NPD sur les enjeux du pipeline Énergie-Est et la décision des tribunaux fédéraux reconnaissant le droit des Canadiennes de porter un niqab lors de cérémonies de citoyenneté. Dans les deux cas, les sondages révèlent que la grande majorité des électeurs québécois sont en porte-à-faux avec les positions du NPD sur ces questions. Par cet usage stratégique, et abondamment critiqué, de la politique de brèche (*wedge politics*), le Bloc réussit à semer le doute dans l'esprit des Québécois face à leur appui de 2011 aux NPD. Plusieurs commencent alors à considérer de nouvelles options. Libéraux et bloquistes deviennent ainsi des alternatives viables pour les électeurs progressistes, alors que certains nationalistes plus conservateurs hésitent maintenant entre les bloquistes et les conservateurs.

Malgré ce coup d'éclat qui impose la question du niqab dans l'ordre du jour médiatique, et de bonnes

performances de Duceppe lors des débats télévisés francophones en fin de campagne, le Bloc est cantonné à la troisième place dans les sondages d'opinion. L'opération «niqab», qui contribue certes à la diminution des intentions de vote du NPD, favorise plutôt les libéraux à l'échelle de la province et les conservateurs dans la grande région de Québec.

Le 19 octobre, le Bloc remporte finalement 19,3% des voix, sa pire performance électorale, et fait élire 10 députés, dont sept dans des circonscriptions majoritairement francophones de la région de Montréal. Plusieurs de ces gains, comme dans Mirabel, Rivière-du-Nord ou Pierre-Boucher-Les Patriotes-Verchère, sont très serrés et s'expliquent par la division du vote entre le NPD et les libéraux. Par ces courtes victoires, le Bloc sauve les meubles… et la face. Comble de l'ironie, Gilles Duceppe, le sauveur, subit la défaite dans sa propre circonscription aux mains du NPD alors que Mario Beaulieu, le sacrifié, remporte son élection.

Lors de l'annonce de sa démission comme chef du parti le 22 octobre, Duceppe dira que l'élection des dix députés bloquistes assure l'avenir de la formation pour les quatre prochaines années. Pourtant, l'échec est manifeste. Malgré une campagne audacieuse sur le plan stratégique qui a permis au parti d'atteindre ses objectifs de faire dérailler la campagne du NPD et de conquérir l'ordre du jour électoral, la majorité des Québécois n'appuie pas le Bloc. Le sauveur, la politique de brèche et les slogans patriotiques de 2015 n'ont pas permis de convaincre les électeurs du Québec qu'ils avaient tout à gagner en votant pour lui. Au cours des quatre prochaines années, ce sont plutôt les stratèges bloquistes qui devront relever d'importants défis afin assurer réellement l'avenir du parti qui semble, aujourd'hui, plus qu'incertain.

The Conservative Campaign

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The Conservative campaign never really moved the dial. The party started and ended at about 30% in the polls. It has now been pushed back to its core support in western Canada and rural Ontario, roughly where it was after the 2004 election.

With the benefit of hindsight, one can see that the basic conception of the Conservative campaign was fundamentally flawed. Making economic management the central theme was okay, but beyond that the campaign was too defensive, almost paranoid. "Protect our economy"—what kind of slogan is that? Fear of what opponents might do in government is important, but it can't be the only motivation. A campaign has to offer positive benefits to voters to secure their support.

Indeed, the Conservatives did offer benefits, such as enrichment of the Universal Child Care Benefit, income splitting for parents, and raising of the TFSA contribution limit; but these had already been legislated in the spring budget, so there was little new to be said during the campaign. Even worse, making the offer so far in advance allowed the Liberals to craft their own counter-offer—richer benefits for most parents, a tax cut for everyone making more than $45,000 in taxable income, and higher taxes only for the "one percent" reporting more than $200,000 in taxable income. It was rather like the 2000 election, when Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day revealed his flat tax proposal early, allowing Jean Chrétien to respond with his own package of tax cuts.

Contrast this to the 2005-06 campaign, which first brought the Conservatives to power. Then they offered a GST cut for everyone and the Child Care Allowance for parents. The details were held back, so that no other party could outbid the Conservatives. And it was affordable because Paul Martin's government had run a surplus that could now be spent without going into deficit (that came later with the Great Recession of 2008).

Experience suggests that a conservative party cannot successfully run only on a theme of balanced budgets and fiscal responsibility, except perhaps when government spending has gotten completely out of hand. In normal times—and this was a very normal time—a conservative party has to show how its free-market, fiscally responsible policies will make ordinary people better off—and that means better off in the next four years, not in the past. The Conservative party of 2015 seemed to have forgotten the lesson of 2006.

Another problem was that the Conservative campaign was so centred around the theme of Harper's leadership. This might have worked before the Duffy scandal, when Harper was widely respected if not liked, but the Duffy revelations did damage to his personal brand that had not been repaired by the beginning of the campaign. The leadership trope was such an obvious failure that by the end of the campaign, the party was reduced to running ads saying that Mr. Harper was "not perfect" and the election was "not about" him—quite the contrary to what the campaign was supposed to be.

Against this backdrop, dropping the writ early for an eleven-week campaign seems to have been another mistake, though it did cut off hostile third-party advertising. It was supposed to allow the Conservatives to capitalize on their financial advantage, but money cannot substitute for message. If you have nothing compelling to say, saying it over and over doesn't help. The long writ period

allowed the campaign to be disrupted by external factors such as the Duffy trial, the refugee crisis, and the niqab decision from the Federal Court of Appeal. Since the Conservatives didn't have a persuasive message of their own, their campaign was easily thrown off track by such developments.

The niqab issue, suddenly propelled to the fore by an unexpected decision from the bench by the Federal Court of Appeal, gave the Conservatives an opportunity for wedge politics against the NDP, which they exploited to win twelve seats in Quebec. But it backfired in the larger Canadian context. The anti-Harper "change" vote was like a see-saw; and when the NDP went down, the Liberals went up. It was strategic voting on a grand scale by voters who wanted Harper gone and who did not particularly care whether the NDP or Liberals finished the job.

All in all, it was a big disappointment for the Conservatives but not a catastrophe. Their organization and core vote remains intact, and if they find the right leader to replace Harper, they can be competitive again in the next election. Of course, that's a big "if." Ask the Liberals about the difference between being led by Michael Ignatieff or Justin Trudeau.

[Note: An earlier version appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on October 20, 2015 at http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/conservatives-had-the-money-but-forgot-the-message/article26883457/

Greens by the Numbers

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The Greens went into the campaign with the optimistic goal of amplifying the party's voice in Ottawa—not only reclaiming seats for leader Elizabeth May and deputy leader Bruce Hyer, who was originally elected as an NDP MP, but adding to the tiny caucus. At the very least, the Greens hoped for enough seats to give them the balance of power in a minority Parliament; at best, enough to push them into official party status of 12 seats. However, they fell well short of their goals. The party was cut back down to one seat—May's Vancouver Island riding of Saanich-Gulf Island—and finished with its lowest national vote share in more than a decade. In the new majority Parliament, they wield no power and have limited influence.

The failure to add another Green MP, especially on Vancouver Island, was a blow, given the key elements they had aligned there: a high-profile leader with long coattails; a team with star candidates such as prominent local journalist Jo-Ann Roberts, and evidence of popular support in a handful of ridings, including Roberts' Victoria, where the party had come close to victory in the 2012 federal by-election. They had money in the bank and a focused strategy in place. May's national leadership tour was a roadmap of the ridings holding the party's hopes; in the campaign's 78 days she only ventured out of British Columbia nine times—and two of the trips beyond the province included leadership debates, not just local campaign-boosting elsewhere. Her main message was that democracy needed rescuing and that the Greens could precipitate that process.

From the start, the party sought to insert itself and its leader into the national campaign discourse through the adoption of social-media messaging and targeted fundraising techniques. Excluded from three of the five leaders' debates, and not routinely covered alongside other parties by the mainstream media, May and the Greens set out to capture national attention by staging virtual debates via social media. As the other party leaders sparred in Calgary during the second major encounter of the campaign, May weighed in from Victoria, tweeting answers and challenging her opponents' facts in a series of short video clips recorded on the spot. Her some two dozen debate video tweets were retweeted nearly 12,000 times. May used the same Twitter tactic when she was excluded from the subsequent foreign policy debate in Toronto. Her use of Twitter, as well as the meme of her "super sassy peace sign," which she flashed as the French-language debate that she participated in got underway, garnered her additional social media traffic.

Wielded as an attention-getting tool, the Greens' social media strategy clearly worked. The larger issue is one of efficacy. At no time was there doubt that May would reclaim her own seat, so a more pertinent measurement of success would be connected to the strategy's impact on the party's popular vote, especially in its targeted ridings. Rachel Gibson and Ian McAllister are among the scholars whose work suggests social media campaigning helps smaller parties become more competitive; however, it is difficult to accurately gauge the potential halo effect of May's digital personality given the other factors at play—including the push for strategic voting—during campaign 2015.

Much easier to measure is the success of the party's fundraising campaign. Contrary to expectations, losing the per vote subsidy did not take the Greens out of the game financially. By the time that they received their last

subsidy instalment of approximately $72,000 in early 2015, they had already fundraised more than $3 million dollars in 2014 alone. Between the beginning of 2015 and election day, the number rose to $4 million. The party fine-tuned its fundraising techniques to target a growing number of supporters with appeals for small amounts tied to specific goals. The money allowed them to mount a more professional campaign and to join the national conversation with their own political messaging.

But at the end of the day, the Greens' final numbers told the tale of a successful fundraising push and a carefully planned campaign strategy that did not translate into seat gains, in no small part due to the larger political forces at work across the country. The party could not capitalize on its pre-existing support at the local level. Canadians who may have been inclined to vote Green under different circumstances, as they have provincially (in BC, New Brunswick, and PEI) and municipally (in Vancouver), put their votes elsewhere.

According to Fair Vote Canada, under a proportional system the Greens would have netted eleven seats on October 19. Given past patterns, the party's supporters likely need to depend on electoral system reform if they hope to elect more than one Green MP in the future. If the Liberals follow through on their promise that 2015 will be the last first-past-the-post-election, and if the Greens spend the next few years cultivating their small pockets of local support across the country, there is potential for them to ensure their federal election results in 2019 and beyond more closely match their national aspirations.

The Liberals' Campaign for the Ages

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Even before the polls closed it was clear the Liberal Party had staged one of the most remarkable comebacks in Canadian history. From their third- place standing on August 2, the Liberals roared back to take over 39% of the popular vote and 184 seats, winning a decisive majority government. And with support in every region of the country, including with Quebec's francophone voters and in Alberta, the party could legitimately claim to be truly national.

The magnitude of the party's accomplishment is apparent when contrasted with the situation in May 2011. The Liberals were reeling from an unprecedented third-place finish in that election, reduced to 19% of the popular vote and 34 seats. The party's vaunted electoral machine was in ruins. The party itself was close to bankruptcy and looking for its fourth permanent leader in less than eight years. Conventional wisdom predicted the Liberals' imminent demise or a merger with the NDP, and the death of modern liberalism.

Part of their comeback is due to many concrete steps taken long before the 2015 campaign began. First, the decision of the party executive to defer the leadership race until spring 2013 proved crucial. Then, under newly-elected leader Justin Trudeau, the Liberals undertook a significant reorganization, rebuilding at the riding level, introducing state-of-the-art technology, and dramatically improving their fundraising capacity. In 2014 alone the party's revenue increased by 40% over 2013, bringing in a total of $15.8 million, or double the amount raised by the NDP, despite the latter's Official Opposition status. The importance of this can hardly be overemphasized in light of the Conservatives' decision to conduct one of the longest and most expensive campaigns in history and the winding down of the per-vote financial subsidy.

The Liberals' rebuilding exercise was accompanied by a gradual recovery in the polls. The party occupied first place for much of 2014 and early 2015. Still, there were ongoing concerns about the leader's lack of experience (fuelled by Conservative ads claiming Trudeau was "just not ready") and the party's lack of policy substance. Trudeau's controversial decision to support the Conservatives' anti-terror bill (C-51) added to doubts and contributed to the NDP's emergence as the frontrunner by May 2015, when the Liberals fell once more to third place. Fears within the party resurfaced that the NDP would become the preferred alternative for "Anybody-but-Harper" voters, some 65% of the electorate. Indeed, at the start of the campaign, talk centred on the possibility of a NDP federal government.

Yet barely four weeks later, the tables were turned, and by October 2 the Liberals were ahead to stay. Their recovery was undoubtedly helped by the Conservatives' decision to launch an 11-week official campaign which allowed the Liberals to define themselves, and also by NDP leader Thomas Mulcair's underwhelming performance in the debates, to say nothing of the unexpected NDP platform which combined a commitment to balanced budgets with a wish list of future social programs that would be delayed due to lack of revenue. But with Trudeau's August 25 declaration that his party would run small deficits to finance infrastructure investment, the Liberals carved out a niche on the left to distinguish themselves from the NDP. That move appears to have produced significant gains in public opinion, breaking them out of a lengthy three-way tie. The Liberals' momentum then took flight. Announcements

cancelling the F-35 defence contract and a sympathetic open letter to public servants caught the NDP off guard. Meanwhile Trudeau's debate performances and impassioned speeches at huge public rallies, where he focused on a positive message and an overarching liberal vision for the country, sent the Liberals' stock soaring. The party was also aided by the Conservatives' decision to launch a campaign of fear over the niqab, which kneecapped the NDP in Quebec and confirmed the Liberals as the party of choice to defeat the Harper government.

The various strategic errors of the other opposition parties only helped to enhance the already positive impact made by the Liberals' own efforts. Indeed, the Liberal campaign was widely judged to be superior on every front. Justin Trudeau appeared increasingly confident and comfortable in the leaders' debates and on the hustings and quickly proved to be a major asset to the party. Similarly, the Liberal ad campaign proved highly effective while the platform was widely considered to be progressive but practical, again differentiating the Liberals from the NDP. Finally, the Liberals recruited a broad range of strong candidates, providing Trudeau with bench strength to convince voters the party was ready to govern.

In the end the Liberal comeback resulted from their long-term rebuilding plan and an exceptionally well-executed campaign strategy. Their margin of victory in terms of seats also demonstrates that their message resonated with voters, confirming that the era of modern liberalism is far from over.

The NDP's "Government in Waiting" Strategy

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The federal New Democratic Party entered the 2015 election in a position that was unprecedented in its 80-year electoral history. For the first time ever, the party began a campaign as the Official Opposition, with a solid base of seats in Quebec and in first place in the majority of public domain polls. Given the legitimacy of the idea that the NDP represented the "government in waiting," the overarching strategic consideration of the party was to present the NDP as a governing party and to present leader Tom Mulcair as the next prime minister. All other possible strategic priorities—attacking Stephen Harper, attacking Justin Trudeau, representing social democratic values, being seen to be accommodating of Québécois nationalism—became subordinated to this overarching campaign objective.

A closer look at the press releases and television advertising of the NDP during the first part of the campaign reveals four primary elements of their government-in-waiting strategy. First, early NDP television advertising focused on an initial campaign of presenting Mulcair's family background and his experience as a cabinet minister in the Quebec provincial government. There was a clear attempt to positively brand Mulcair as an experienced leader who personified middle-class values. Second, another series of televised ads opted for hard-edged attacks on corruption within the Harper government and Canada's poor economic performance since the Conservatives took power. NDP communications from early in the campaign therefore barely mentioned Trudeau and the Liberal Party.

Third, while the initial phase of NDP television ads focused on Mulcair, the party's press releases highlighted various members of the NDP team who would form an eventual cabinet in a NDP government. Fourth, the NDP choose to emphasize a long-term policy vision to portray itself as a moderate and reasonable party that had plans to kickstart the economy and protect the interests of Canada's middle class. It promised to balance the budget in every year of its mandate and phase-in its social policy engagements, such as a national $15-a-day childcare plan, over several years. It also touted its plan for promoting economic growth that included a reduction in small-business taxes.

However, the NDP was forced to adjust its strategy during the later part of the campaign in reaction to the rise of the Liberals in public polling (and one can only assume within internal polling as well). The first, and most evident, strategic change was to attack Trudeau and the Liberal Party on cuts that they would enact, the deficits that they would run, and the Bill C-51 Anti-Terrorism Act. The second and related strategic alteration was to shift the emphasis to issues that showed the NDP to be more "progressive" than the Liberals. In the party's press releases and commercials, issues of health care, the environment, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) replaced the emphasis on fiscal responsibility and the economy. The NDP also began to make a direct strategic-voting pitch to voters by pointing out that it needed to win only 35 new seats to beat the Conservatives whereas the Liberals had to win over 100 new seats to ensure that Stephen Harper would no longer be Prime Minister. These strategic shifts were accompanied by continued references to the experienced leadership of Mulcair, and of highlighting the quality of the NDP's team of candidates.

Judging the success or failure of this strategy depends on whether someone uses a long-term or short-term

perspective. Winning 20% of the 2015 popular vote ranks among the highest scores in the CCF-NDP's electoral history. Its popular vote and seat total in Quebec is much higher than any of the federal elections that took place before 2011. However, taking a short-term view, if public domain polls during the summer were accurate, the situation is less rosy. The NDP went from a contender to form government in the middle of August to reverting back to its traditional position as the third party in the House of Commons on election night.

As such, the 2015 federal election returned Canada to a two-and-half party system similar to what prevailed for most of the second half of the 20th century. The party will have to combat the impression that voting NDP is somehow a wasted vote because the Liberals can actually deliver on their promises as the governing party and because voting Liberal prevents the Conservatives from getting back into power. Barring a major change in the electoral system—something that the Trudeau Liberals have pledged—the primary consequence of the NDP's poor electoral performance for Canadian democracy may be a renewed dominance of the national political discourse by the Liberals and the Conservatives. Under the existing electoral framework, the NDP will struggle to be heard and will have to constantly fight to be seen as relevant in the eyes of the media and the public.

Leading the Party Troops on a Long Campaign: How the Party Leaders Managed the Message

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To lead is to communicate; this behaviour is fundamental to successful political campaigns. The leader's messaging guides each team of candidates, ensuring that core ideas are repeated faithfully in thousands of local conversations with voters and community media. Party leaders' communications serve also to help focus and co-ordinate 338 campaign teams and the volunteers supplying critical resources on the ground. For voters and the media, leaders' messages usually are the key source of party information.

The unusual length of the 2015 federal election challenged party leader messaging in two ways. First, the 78-day campaign meant that leaders faced a large challenge in communicating a consistent theme while avoiding being pulled "off message" by unexpected events and news headlines. A second challenge was to keep the central message fresh, and relevant to the campaign's context, to engage citizens and attract media coverage. How well did each of the three major party leaders address these pressures? The leaders of the Conservative and New Democratic parties had trouble managing these challenges, while the Liberal leader was much more successful in keeping his message consistent, focused, and relevant.

In early August, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper began the campaign by emphasizing his proven leadership ability and his party's commitment to maintaining a steady economic approach. He stayed on message during the resumption of Senator Mike Duffy's trial, despite much media scrutiny. However, despite the virtues of his confident, consistent communications, by mid-September the message seemed stale. "More of the same" made for rather boring headlines, and so reporters and voters focused on how the Conservatives were responding to several attention-grabbing media stories, such as poor economic numbers and the Syrian refugee crisis. By the campaign's midway point in September the Tories were losing ground in opinion-poll standings and insiders were complaining that they were off message. A campaign reset was undertaken: Harper began talking more actively about the other leaders' deficiencies, and emphasizing his controversial position that women should not be allowed to wear a face veil at citizenship ceremonies. Harper ended the campaign by focusing on public security issues, likely to try to shore up his base of support.

New Democratic Party leader Tom Mulcair's main message, at the outset, emphasized the real possibility that his party would replace the governing Conservatives. Buoyed by the NDP's success in taking government in Alberta, and by his record as Official Opposition leader, Mulcair positioned his party as the best choice for change. "I want to speak to every Canadian who thinks Mr. Harper's government is on the wrong track, to every Canadian who is looking for change in Ottawa," he said in early August. Mulcair communicated a dignified but cautious front-runner stance in the first leaders' debate. However, as the campaign wore on, he devoted much attention to using headline issues to try to further undermine the Tories. He spent much time speaking about the Harper government's failure to manage the Syrian refugee issue, the problems within the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, and the right of women to wear a niqab. The NDP leader's messaging became diffused across a number of issues. Moreover, when he tried to restore focus late in the campaign, he

seemed out of touch. In the context of opinion polls showing marked decline in support—to third place—Mulcair continued to repeat that the NDP was the most competitive alternative, needing only 35 more seats to replace the Conservatives.

Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau began campaigning with a positive message, emphasizing that his party was the only one with a real plan to strengthen the middle class and the economy. He consistently reiterated this theme and while he commented on several headline issues such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal and the Syrian refugee issue, he managed to avoid becoming enmeshed in these issues and being pulled off message. At the same time, he addressed Harper's charge that he was "just not ready" to govern in part by aggressively challenging the other leaders and by defending the integrity of citizenship during the Munk leaders' debate by asserting Canadians "are kind, generous, open minded, optimistic and know in their heart of hearts that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian." As his third-place party moved up in the poll standings, Trudeau remained on message. Although he, like Mulcair, defended the right of women to wear the niqab, he communicated this position clearly, and without muddying his messaging or sacrificing the focus of his communications. Justin Trudeau concluded the campaign with much the same message he had begun with: only the Liberals will help people by raising taxes on the wealthiest citizens—Mulcair and Harper will not.

The eleven-week long campaign amply demonstrates the difficulties that party leaders face in articulating consistent, responsive communications. The Liberal Party's majority win owes much to adroit party leadership in managing the message across a protracted election period.

Political Staff

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Distinct species of staffers roam the corridors of federal politics. Some work for political parties directly, but most are employed by Members of Parliament and by ministers. Paid by taxpayers yet hired explicitly to provide political support, these staffers represent a large pool of experienced and highly motivated political talent for all parliamentary parties. Party election teams are also augmented by loyalists who take time out from their private sector lives to assist the campaign, usually on a volunteer basis.

When an election is called, those privileged to hold political jobs are expected to contribute to the political cause. Indeed, campaign work is essential for establishing credibility on any political team. A few staffers run for elected office, but most help with heavy lifting behind the scenes, whether with local campaigns, the national leader's tour, or in the national party war room. This might involve developing and communicating the party's platform, scripting announcements, preparing backgrounders and press releases for distribution, coordinating voter identification and get-out-the-vote efforts, managing a digital brand for a candidate or the leader across various social media platforms, responding to breaking issues and even opposition research so that campaigns know—and can exploit—their opponents' previous statements and record.

The rules of engagement for ministerial staff are clearly spelled out by Treasury Board and by the Privy Council Office, and for parliamentary staff by the House of Commons Board of Internal Economy. Taxpayer funds may not be used for election purposes, and so any staffers who wish to run for office or campaign full time must take a leave of absence; those campaigning part time must do so only on their own personal time and may not use any government or parliamentary resources. Recent guidance from the Commissioner of Lobbying has significantly curtailed the ability of government-relations professionals to campaign.

It is essential, however, that staffers respect the precept "first, do no harm." When political staff attract media attention they risk derailing the campaign. Stories about former or current Conservative staffers during the 2015 election campaign gave aid and comfort to the party's opponents. This was clear during the August trial of Senator Mike Duffy when former Prime Minister's Office (PMO) staffers Nigel Wright, Ben Perrin and Chris Woodcock were called to testify, and when Nick Koolsbergen, PMO director of issues management on leave for the campaign, precipitated questions about witness tampering by speaking with his former colleague during a break in his testimony. In mid-September, the prime minister was forced off message by questions about staff as anonymous sources grumbled about Conservative campaign manager Jenni Byrne and the internal "blame game" became reporters' preferred topic.

Eruptions were not limited to the Conservatives. New Democratic Party leader Thomas Mulcair's director of communications, Shawn Dearn, became the story of the day when pressed to apologize for offensive two-year-old tweets about the pope. Liberal campaign co-chair Dan Gagnier was forced to resign after press reports that he had provided advice to an energy company on how best to lobby a new Liberal government, something Justin Trudeau conceded was "inappropriate". Such episodes are damaging for two reasons. First, national political campaigns are tightly scripted.

Leaders have only limited opportunity to communicate their policies and priorities. Therefore when journalists report problems generated by staffers, they are not talking about the party's carefully planned messages. Second, because staff are often personally connected to the leader, their gaffes or misconduct reflect on the leader more directly than might be the case with local candidates who are not part of the inner circle.

Even positive publicity for political staff, such as headlines acclaiming Liberal advisors Gerald Butts and Katie Telford as "architects" of the party's victory, can, however well deserved, distract from the leader and the leader's message and even insinuate that the leader is only being managed by the big brains in the back room. No leader welcomes this image, least of all a prime minister, who must both be and be seen to be in charge.

Ultimately, political staffers have a vital role to play on any election campaign. They bring experience and savvy mixed with (often) the energy, enthusiasm, and stamina of youth. Further, they are highly motivated to work for the party's success since their future employment prospects depend on it. But staffers need to do so behind the scenes. When they become the story bad things usually result.

Elections represent a watershed moment at a personal level for political staffers. Those belonging to the victorious party scramble for posts in a euphoric but personally high-stakes game of musical chairs. Many on the losing side end up out on the streets and competing with their former colleagues for a much smaller number of parliamentary positions, or for private-sector jobs when their political currency is trading at a big discount. This is especially hard for staffers when high campaign expectations have just been dashed by cold water from the electorate. It is important therefore to remember the deep human dimension of elections, which is true for staffers behind the scenes as much as it is for MPs and candidates.

The Presidentialization of Executive Leadership in Canada

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Three days before the 2015 election, *The Globe and Mail* endorsed the Conservative Party, but not Stephen Harper, as its preferred choice to lead the country. The newspaper was immediately mocked on social media for its implausible preferred scenario. How can you endorse a party but not its leader? The reaction demonstrated a new truth about Canadian federal politics. It is increasingly difficult to ascertain whether voters are in fact voting for or against a particular party or whether they are voting for or against a particular leader. The 2015 federal election was one in which the vast majority of Canadians were apparently casting a ballot against Harper and in favour of Justin Trudeau or Thomas Mulcair. They were less likely to be voting Liberal or NDP, and against the Conservatives. Further, the vast majority of voters were likely unaware of the details in each of the political party platforms. It was indicative of a steadily increasing presidentialization of politics and leadership in Canada.

In 2015, presidentializing forces focused the public's attention on the character, temperament, and electability of party leaders. This trend has significant effects on how campaigns are structured and goes to the heart of how Canadian politicians today conceive of Parliamentary democracy. So thinking about politics as a leader-driven spectacle is likely here to stay with elections focused on how leaders perform and how leaders frame their political opponents. The Team Trudeaus, Team Mulcairs and Team Harpers are the new reality. The same can be said about the attention paid to Elizabeth May over the Green Party, and to Gilles Duceppe rather than the Bloc Québécois.

These presidentializing, Americanizing, and personalizing tendencies consist of more than just the spectacle of an American-style presidential election campaign. Power and authority over government decision-making has shifted from cabinet and Parliament to the prime minister and a group of unelected officials that work directly for the Canadian executive in a very concentrated and centralizing way. In this regard, presidentializing leadership is compounded by the weakness of Canadian party mechanisms that force executives to bend to Parliamentary caucus will. This makes removal of party leaders by cabinet and elected members more difficult than other Westminster democracies. The growth and aggrandizement of central agencies, especially the Prime Minister's Office, further presidentializes the most important files and issues and has changed the role of cabinet considerably, from a first-among-equals decision making body to a focus group to arguably a mere conduit for media releases today.

The Globe and Mail endorsement also alluded to the other key presidentializing element: the desire of Canadian citizens to view the prime minister not just as head of government but as de facto head of state. This fused power then further complicates the norms of Parliamentary democracy because Canadians demand both a symbolic national leader and a committed partisan.

Stephen Harper discovered after three increasingly successful election campaigns just how difficult this role is when the public holds the executive responsible for government failures and also demands that the leader be a positive symbol for the country. The changes in campaign style, advertising, credit-claiming, and the personalized nature of executive leadership itself is sometimes an uncomfortable fit in a non-presidential system. It

is ironic that presidentialization in Canadian leadership began with the ascendancy of Pierre Trudeau and that this same set of presidentializing forces would help lead to Stephen Harper's downfall, outmaneuvered in the image-is-everything sweepstakes by Justin Trudeau running on a hope-and-change message. After all, Harper institutionalized this presidentialization with the official use of the "Harper Government" slogan in all Government of Canada communications. So he should not have been surprised then that in trying at the end of the very long 2015 campaign to frame the contest as not about him, it was indeed very much about him, and quite personally. The same presidentializing tendency that builds up leaders can also knock them off the pedestal.

Following the elections of Barack Obama and Justin Trudeau, no one should be under the illusion that the combination of the public's focus on executive leadership and the technological savvy of political campaigns communicating directly with the people is going to shift in the opposite direction. Trudeau utilized social media and direct two-way interaction with voters and integrated it successfully into a very presidentialized 2015 campaign. Consequently, in an era of leader-focused Canadian politics, the public understanding of executive leadership looks remarkably presidential.

Ministerial (dis)Advantage in the 2015 Canadian Federal Election

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The 2015 Canadian general election has been described globally as a political earthquake, an unexpected rout, and a stunning election victory or a historic majority win. Headline news is prone to exaggeration; to avoid getting too caught up in the moment it is useful to reflect on the past in order to inform the present. How best to assess the outcome of the 2015 election? One way is to examine how the election affected cabinet ministers, but without reference to individual ministers and their election narratives, which might otherwise taint our perspective.

Cabinet ministers provide a unique window into election dynamics. As both incumbent MPs running for re-election and members of the government, ministers are accountable for their performance as an MP as well as the success and failure of government policy, to their constituents. The twin conventions of individual and collective ministerial responsibility mean that the buck stops at the minister's desk when it comes to matters that pertain to her portfolio, but ministers as a team take responsibility for the deeds and actions of government as a whole by giving the House of Commons the opportunity to pull the rug out from under government at any time. Responsible government is a core pillar of Canadian democracy. Votes of confidence are seldom an issue when the governing party holds a majority of the seats in the House, which is why elections are so interesting from a ministerial point of view.

Every four years or so, voters take over as judge, jury, and executioner with respect to their incumbent MP. This typically entails an assessment of MPs' performance or, by extension, the performance of the party or leader. In the case of ministers, the assessment can extend directly to the minister's handling of their portfolio area as well as the performance of the government of which the minister is an emissary. In this way, ministers' electoral performance may cast a broader light on to voter sentiment and the perception of government performance at the time of an election.

The history of ministerial electoral performance typically plays in favour of ministers. They win more often than their party confrères and they win by wider margins of victory; if and when ministers lose, their margins of defeat are usually smaller than the margins for non-ministers. There are a number of explanations for this phenomenon: political experience, access to privileged resources, name recognition and exposure, safe seats and better redistribution of perks in the minister's riding. Regardless, the take-home message is that ministers typically fare better than non-ministers when it comes to winning their seats in election.

Yet when we look at ministerial turnover at elections, we find considerable variation over the years. A comparison of the 2015 election with the historical record reveals that the current crop of vacating ministers exhibits the fourth highest rate of defeat in 70 years. When put into context, the three elections which saw more ministers lose their seats were the 1993 election in which the governing Progressive Conservative (PC) Party was decimated down to two seats, and the 1984 and 1957 elections in which the PCs were elected to government on the waves of the largest majorities in Canadian political history. The change in ministerial electoral fortunes experienced in 2015 immediately follows these landmark elections.

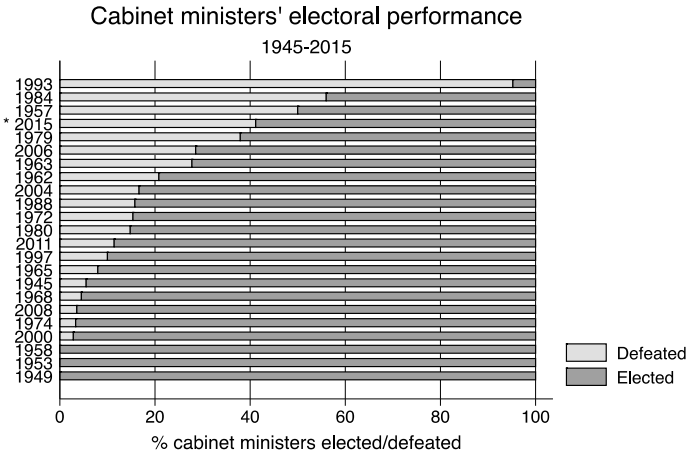
If we turn our attention to measures of individual ministerial performance, an examination of ministers' margins

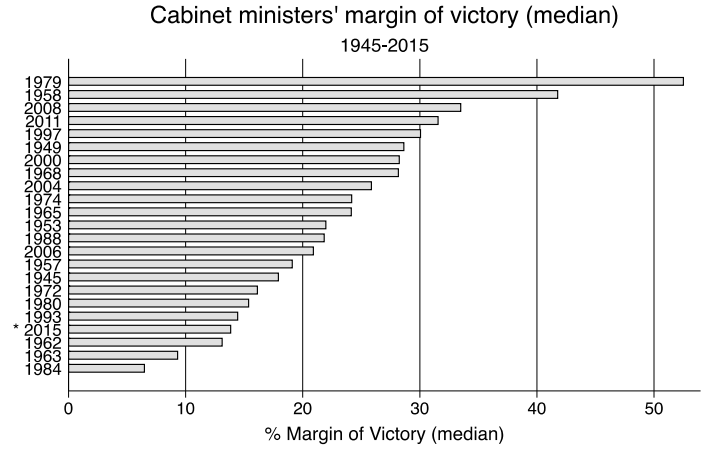
Ministerial (dis)Advantage in the 2015 Canadian Federal Election

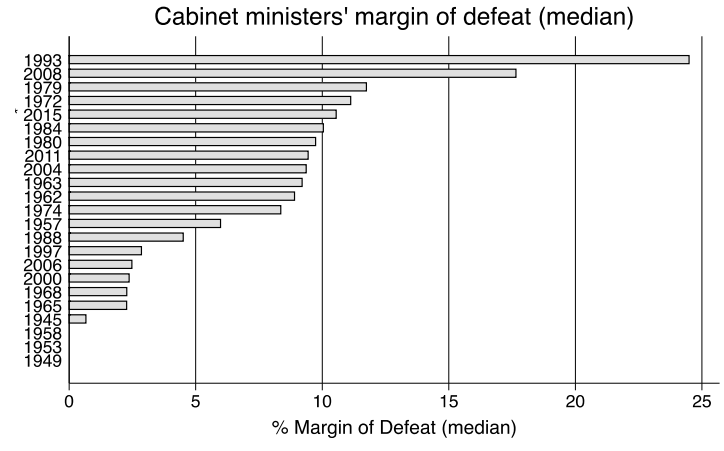
of victory reveals that ministers who kept their seats in the 2015 election won by considerably smaller margins than their predecessors in earlier elections. Indeed, they fared only slightly better than ministers serving at the tumultuous tail end of the Dienfenbaker ministry and those Liberal ministers who perished in the crushing Mulroney victory in 1984. The margins of defeat for those unlucky and unlikely ministers who lost their seats in 2015 was also considerably higher, ranking fifth overall since 1945.[1]

The 2015 election may not have been the most earthshattering election in Canadian political history. But, from the perspective of ministers, there was certainly something different. The ministers who went into the 2015 election lost more seats, won by smaller margins, and lost by bigger margins than is usually the case. Indeed, the 2015 experience situates those ministers in a class typically associated with exceptional elections characterized by significant changes. When placed in the context of its peers, an examination of the electoral fates of cabinet ministers suggests that the 2015 election was, as the outgoing finance minister described it, a "significant defeat" for the Conservative Party and by extension a remarkable win for the Liberals.

1 The 2015 ministers could arguably be ranked fourth given that only one minister, Michael Fortier, a former un-elected senator lost in his bid to win a seat in the 2008 election.







1949, 1953 and 1958: All incumbent ministers won their seats

Constituency Campaigning in the 2015 Federal Election

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Canadian parties' national campaigns are accompanied by the constituency campaigns that must be run in each of the nation's ridings. The goals of constituency campaigns in 2015 remained largely identical to those of campaigns of the past. The 2015 election, however, saw some innovation in how local campaigns pursued their goals.

There are two such goals. First, and most important, constituency campaigns identify supporters and get them out to vote in either the advance polls or on election day. Second, local campaigns seek to identify and persuade undecided voters.

Constituency campaigns draw on an arsenal of methods to achieve these goals. Canvassing and phone calls are used to identify supporters. Literature drops, door hangers, and signs are used to help persuade undecided voters as well as give the campaign a sense of momentum. On election day, campaigns dispatch scrutineers to polling stations where they mark off supporters who have cast their ballots on sheets of paper; "runners" who retrieve these sheets from scrutineers; callers who phone supporters who have not yet cast their ballots; and fleets of drivers who fan out into the riding to shuttle those who need a ride to the polls.

The local canvass remains the centrepiece of any strong constituency campaign. Canvassing—or door-knocking—remains likely the most important activity carried out by these campaigns. Face-to-face contact, both campaign managers and political scientists know, is the gold standard for getting supporters out to vote, and canvassing allows for a reliable record of supporters to be constructed. Accordingly, campaigns typically commit substantial resources—either volunteers or funds—into the local canvass.

Observing the canvass in several constituencies allows for three observations to be drawn about constituency campaigning in the 2015 election. First, there is substantial variability in the resources available to commit to both the canvass and other forms of local campaigning. Some MPs hit the streets with a group of six or more volunteers. One volunteer (typically armed with a smart phone or tablet) records names and whether residents are supporters, while the other volunteers knock on doors. If a resident is home and is identified as undecided, the candidate jogs up to the doorstep to provide their pitch. In this way, campaigns can canvass entire neighbourhoods in a single afternoon. In contrast, other candidates canvass all by their lonesome selves, slowly and inefficiently making their way down streets.

Second, the canvass in 2015, while similar to past elections, was characterized by some technological innovation. Canvassers from all parties were equipped with apps on their mobile phones that carried the names and contact information of electors in the riding, provided by Elections Canada, and included in their organization's database. Canvassers used the apps to quickly identify whether residents were supporters, confirm telephone numbers so residents could be called on election day, and record whether residents would like to host a lawn sign or volunteer with the campaign. All information was updated in real time to the party's central database. Furthermore, the apps use GPS technology to track the location of canvassers so that others working on the campaign can coordinate with teams already in the field.

Finally, the canvass provides an example of how central party campaigns attempt to direct local operations. For instance, in 2015 the central Conservative campaign mandated the number of supporters local organizations would be required to identify each day of the campaign. Those that fell short of their targets could expect to receive a disapproving phone call from "national." This behaviour suggests that the parties appreciate the role of constituency campaigns in identifying supporters and subsequently getting them to the polls.

A classic question about constituency campaigning is whether they are labour or capital intensive. While the tasks described above would seem to demand a vast army of grassroots volunteers, capital also played a role in the 2015 campaign. Some campaigns hired specialized businesses or even community leaders to carry out a quick canvass of the riding in order to identify supporters. Companies were also paid to put up and maintain election signs along roadways throughout the campaign. And volunteer callers in some local operations were replaced by firms that delivered robocalls into the constituency; indeed, one campaign (Gordon Giesbrecht's Conservative campaign in Winnipeg South) planned to dispatch four robocalls to every identified supporter on election day reminding them to get out and vote. While volunteers are undoubtedly important to campaigns, these examples demonstrate that some of the functions traditionally associated with volunteers have been replaced with paid services.

Constituency campaigning is by its nature a massive exercise in voter engagement and mobilization. While the national campaigns may engage in voter suppression and drive down turnout, through negative advertising for instance, constituency campaigning exists to literally move voters from their homes to voting booths.

All Politics Is Not Local: Local Candidate Tweeting in the 2015 Election

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Social media is generally considered a positive development for electioneering. Barack Obama's use of social media in the 2008 American election continues to be heralded as the model for the full potential of digital technology in an election campaign (Strömer-Galley 2014). The Obama campaign was successful in using social media to solicit donations, mobilize grassroots supporters, and engage young voters.

A different side of social media emerged in the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign. Several local candidates became major news stories because of comments and actions made or captured on social media. After four-year old inappropriate tweets surfaced, a Liberal candidate dropped out the race. As did a Conservative candidate, who had posted YouTube videos making crank calls. Several other candidates were forced to apologize for comments/actions previously made on social media, including an NDP candidate who was rebuked for a disrespectful online remark about Auschwitz. While these incidents generated considerable media attention, it is not clear how typical this is.

Much has been written, going back to the 2008 election, on the use of social media by Canadian political parties and their leaders (e.g., Francoli et al. 2012), however we know very little about how Canada's local candidates make use of it. We therefore decided to explore the use of one social media, Twitter, by sampling 33 local candidates across nine ridings in the last month of the 2015 campaign.[1] More specifically, we examine the content of tweets written by the candidates to assess the nature of campaign communication in the Twittersphere.[2]

First, we found that the majority of all candidates in our study referenced their leader at some point during the last month of the election. For example, Liberal candidate Judy Foote (Bonavista Burin Trinity) highlighted her leader in the following policy-tweet: "@JustinTrudeau's plan invests $3B for home, long-term and palliative care" (October 2, 2015). This is consistent with findings from the 2011 Ontario election, which found that local candidates put a good amount of attention on the party leader within constituency campaigning (Cross et al., 2015).

While the local-candidate campaign carries little importance relative to the national campaign in the minds of voters (see Blais et al., 2003), incumbent candidates and those in competitive ridings do tend to focus their communication more on the local campaign. These tweets predominately include messages about their daily whereabouts, and acknowledge various community businesses, residents, and local points of interest like sports teams and community festivals. Interestingly, of those candidates in our study, none of those who focused their messages more on issues of national importance, like the economy or the environment, were elected. This might suggest that some candidates have a greater ability to present an independent message from the national party than others, which coincides with their competitiveness (Sayers, 1999).

1 Our sample was selected to include competitive and non-competitive electoral races across rural, suburban and urban ridings. The ridings include: Fleetwood Port Kells (BC), New Westminster-Burnaby (BC), Foothills (AB), Calgary Centre (AB), Winnipeg South Centre (MB), University Rosedale (ON), Bruce Grey Owen Sound (ON), Central Nova (NS), and Bonavista Burin Trinity (NL). Data were collected for the four weeks prior to the election.

2 Retweets excluded.

This focus on the leaders extends to negative campaigning. When local candidates in the sample "go negative," they tweet against their opponent(s)' party and/or leader. For example, liberal candidate Kimberly Love (Bruce Grey Owen Sound) tweeted, "Harper lacks ambition for our country. His vision of Canada is small, meek and fearful" (October 5, 2015). Indeed, 20 of the 33 candidates we followed tweeted a negative opponent leader reference. The tweeting of negative messages against local opponents was somewhat less common (10/30 candidates). An example includes, "Why does @LarryMillerMP support moves that sell out his (former) fellow dairy farmers?" (Chris Albinati, Green Party, Sept. 29, 2015). The candidates from the Liberal and the NDP parties were most likely to engage in negative campaigning at the local level, presenting an interesting counter-narrative to the national frame of the Conservative Party as the one most prone to propagating negative messages.

Finally, the evidence of the dominance of the national campaign narrative in Twitter communication emerges when we examine the tweets that explicitly ask followers to vote on Election Day. The majority of candidates did not actually ask their followers to vote for them, but they rather invited followers to vote for their party. The exceptions to this trend being Liberal candidates Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre) and Chrystia Freeland (University Rosedale); both candidates ran in very competitive races and tweeted for followers to vote for them more times than they requested followers to vote for their party.

It appears that the controversial pre-campaign uses of social media that got some candidates in trouble in 2015 is atypical against our sample of local candidates' Twitter accounts during the campaign. Overall, we found that candidates use Twitter rather conservatively. Rather than engaging in local topic and issue, candidates stick to the national party line. Despite the old adage, all politics is not local in the Canadian Twittersphere.

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Gender and Election 2015: Continuity with No Real Change

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The 2015 federal election could be broadly defined as about change. Yet, for gender equality, the election represents the status quo: Canadian women are about as underrepresented now as they were before the election. For women, Election 2015 was more about continuity than it was about change.

This continuity can be seen in three places: the leaders, the candidates, and the issues.

Like most campaigns, this election focused on the party leaders. By definition, this main narrative was about men: Stephen Harper, Justin Trudeau, and Thomas Mulcair. Notably absent is Elizabeth May. The Green Party and May predicated their electoral strategy on earning media coverage through debates. This did not go as planned as May was often not invited to participate in most of the scheduled debates. Her absence ensured the voices most Canadians heard during the campaign were primarily, if not exclusively, men's.

Though absent as leaders, women were more present in the campaign as candidates than ever before. Over 500 women were nominated candidates and 16.5% of them (88) were elected. This is the highest number of women ever elected to the House of Commons in Canadian history. However, given the increase in seats to 338, the proportion of elected women candidates is about the same in 2015 as what it was in 2011, 2006, 2004, and 2000.

Research suggests that Canadians happily vote for women candidates, so women's presence as nominated candidates (or lack thereof) is typically framed in terms of supply to and demand from political parties. In 2015, the problem was not with supply. Instead, women are underrepresented as candidates mostly because parties do not demand women candidates in large numbers.

Parties only needed to nominate 169 women to field a gender-equal slate of candidates in 2015. It is implausible that, of the 17 million women in Canada, a party could not find 169 willing to serve as candidates who could also survive an internal vetting process. Every political party centrally sets some rules surrounding candidate nomination: it is clear this central process could, but often doesn't, require that local party associations actively recruit women as candidates.

Of the three most competitive parties, the New Democratic Party consistently nominates the most women as candidates: 43% of NDP candidates in 2015 were women. Despite unexpectedly losing a number of seats, the NDP's caucus following the election is 42% women. This suggests that the NDP actively recruits women as candidates in ridings they stand a good chance to win.

The Conservative Party, by contrast, continues to lag behind other parties. Only 19% of Conservative candidates, and only 17% of the new caucus, are women. The Conservatives doubled the number of women nominated as candidates between 2006 and 2008, suggesting that if the party chose to, it could recruit more women candidates. That they do not do so reveals that gender equality is not a priority for the party.

For the Liberals, 2015 is a perplexing election with respect to gender equality. About 31% of Liberal candidates were women, and a number of Liberal candidates were unexpectedly elected. Despite this, the proportion of women elected to the Liberal caucus is markedly lower (27%). This suggests that the Liberals' women candidates were disproportionately nominated

in ridings they had no hope of winning, even unexpectedly. Though disappointing, this is in keeping with research that shows parties disproportionately nominate women in ridings that they cannot win. The silver lining is that the Liberal platform promised that a Liberal cabinet would have gender parity.

Still, Election 2015 highlights how most political parties in Canada are unwilling to nominate women as candidates in equal numbers as men. This marks parties as a key, informal barrier to women's election. Given this, perhaps the most effective way to remove this barrier would be to provide financial incentives for parties to nominate more women as candidates.

Finally, nearly every issue raised during the campaign could have, but was not, viewed through a gendered lens. Murdered and missing Indigenous women were addressed in passing, if at all. Economic issues were framed in terms of tax credits or government deficits; no party addressed Canada's pay gap. Childcare debates were focused on families rather than women; had a gendered lens been applied, the role childcare plays in facilitating mothers' labour force participation may have been raised. Even the niqab was presented as primarily about security and immigration. Had the niqab been viewed as a gender-equality issue, the absurdity of the state using its power to coerce women out of a garment would have been readily apparent.

Overall, the 2015 federal election marks a missed opportunity to address gender inequality in Canadian politics. Instead, Canadians were presented with a campaign that, by these measures, is more in line with the status quo than it was with change.

LGBT Activism in the 2015 Federal Election

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With a lesbian premier of Ontario and a gay premier of Prince Edward Island, one might think that attention to the equal representation of sexual orientation is no longer necessary.

However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) Canadians are still far from achieving equitable representation in the political process. Only six acknowledged LGBT politicians held seats in the House of Commons at the time of dissolution. One, Libby Davies, decided not to run again. This election, once again six LGBT candidates (albeit several different ones) were successful despite a slight increase in the number who actually ran. These numbers remain small, with the new members representing just 1.8% of the 338 seats in the House of Commons.Why are so few LGBT candidates running for office and even fewer getting elected? The answer lies in many of the same challenges that women and racial minorities have historically confronted.

First, it is not due to voter bias. A 2012 Environics survey found that 67% of Canadians showed a high level of agreement with the idea that gays and lesbians should be permitted to run for public office; a further 27% held no strong opinion. Only 6% disapproved. These results put Canada ahead of all other countries in the Americas in terms of openness to LGBT politicians. However we fall behind other countries, including the United Kingdom, in terms of representation.

Instead, the barriers seem to be located at the party level with party gatekeepers, or with potential candidates who do not feel that they would be welcomed by their party.

It is clear from the table following that the New Democratic Party is the party that has been most open to running LGBT candidates. Not only is it ideologically predisposed to promote equality, being an early adopter of the Declaration of Montreal on LGBT Human Rights, it has also enshrined equality for LGBT members in its party constitution and has a LGBT Commission as one of its representative bodies. Furthermore, its affirmative action policies require that it makes special efforts to encourage and facilitate the electoral participation of women, LGBT, and minority candidates. These policies only allow the holding of nomination meetings once candidates from under-represented groups have been sought out. The Liberals established Queer Liberals in 2011, based originally in Toronto, but now with chapters across the country. The Conservatives followed with LGB-Tories, also set up in Toronto, with the goal of providing a "LGBT voice within the party, and a Conservative voice in the LGBT community." However, representation is not as institutionalized, nor are the recruitment policies as strong in either of these parties (nor for that matter in the Bloc Québécois or the Greens), as it is with the NDP.

In 2015, women made up under 30% of the candidates and won 26% of the seats in Parliament. Only six female LGBT candidates ran, and only one was elected. There were also few LGBT candidates who were non-white. Only one trans candidate ran in this election (for the Strength through Democracy Party), although at least one other ran for a NDP nomination.

Attention to LGBT issues in the election focused on parties' and leaders' efforts to demonstrate support for LGBT rights, evidenced by the appearance of Mulcair, Trudeau, Duceppe, and May at major pride parades, and their criticism of Harper for not attending. Conservative candidates also failed to attend well-publicized de-

bates on LGBT issues held in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. Grassroots LGBT organizations within the parties attempted to promote an inclusive image by appearing at pride parades, providing information booths at these events, or hosting LGBT Family Day celebrations. However, these efforts to show support were occasionally overshadowed by candidates in various parties who drew attention, or were forced to resign, due to homophobic comments made on the campaign trail.

While there are some signs that Canada is becoming more open to the LGBT community, the lack of any real debate in this election on issues such as trans rights, housing for LGBT youth, or the criminalization of HIV status suggests that much of the efforts of political parties continue to remain symbolic as opposed to substantive.

Number of out LGBT candidates by party, 2004-2015

	Conservatives	Liberals	NDP	BQ	Greens	Other	Total
2004	2	4	15	1	0		22
2006	0	2	10	2	0		14
2008	2	3	3	0	1		9
2011	0	3	10	0	5		19
2015	1	6	9	0	3	1	20
Total	5	18	47	3	9	1	84

Source: Data compiled by the author

Visible Minority and Indigenous Members of Parliament

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Canada's 42nd Parliament will include 47 visible minority Members of Parliament and 10 Indigenous MPs, record highs for both groups. The Liberals elected the most MPs of colour—83% of visible minority and Indigenous MPs will sit in the government caucus—followed by the Conservatives and the New Democrats.

Visible minority and Indigenous Members of Parliament, by party

	Liberal	Cons.	NDP	Total
Visible minorities	39	6	2	47
Indigenous peoples	8	0	2	10
% of caucus	26	6	9	17

The diversity of the 42nd Parliament dramatically outpaces the high-water mark reached in the previous Parliament when 28 visible minority and seven Indigenous candidates were elected. Following the 2011 election, MPs of colour made up 11% of the House of Commons, compared to 17% following the 2015 election, an increase of 54%.

The presence of visible minority MPs reasonably reflects the presence of visible minorities in Canada. Among Canadian citizens—those who are eligible to run for office and vote in Canadian elections—visible minorities make up 15% of the population. Visible minority MPs, meanwhile, occupy 14% of seats in the House of Commons, meaning that near mirror representation has been achieved. However, the bulk of visible minority MPs are of South Asian and Chinese descent; most other visible minority groups are under-represented in Parliament. This underscores that while benchmarking the elevation of diverse voices to elected office is important, a singular focus on "success" can conceal persistent representational gaps.

Numerical under-representation is also evident when we look at Indigenous MPs. While Indigenous peoples, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, make up more than 4% of the Canadian population, Indigenous MPs occupy just 3% of seats in the House of Commons, meaning they are only three-quarters of the way to proportionality.

Fifteen visible minority women and three Indigenous women were elected in 2015. This is on par with the 15 visible minority women and two Indigenous women who were elected four years earlier, but because the number of seats in the House of Commons has also increased, in proportionate terms, women of colour have in fact seen their presence decrease. Still, they remain a powerful force among visible minority and Indigenous MPs where 32% are women, compared to 25% of women among white MPs.

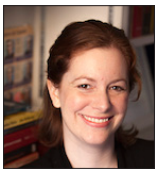
Candidates of colour tend to be elected in only the most racially diverse ridings. On average, visible minority MPs were elected in ridings where visible minorities made up 45% of the population, compared to the average federal riding, where 18% of the population identifies as visible minority. Indigenous MPs, meanwhile, were elected in ridings where Indigenous peoples make up, on average, 33% of the population, even though Indigenous peoples make up 5% of the population of the average federal riding. In other words, to the extent that people of colour are elevated to elected office, this typically only occurs when they run in ridings whose demographic complexion mirrors their own. Analysis by myself and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant shows that the majority of ridings did not include a single candidate of colour running for any of the competitive political parties, even though voters—both white and minority—show

little bias against candidates of colour. This suggests party elites are making assumptions about the ridings in which they think candidates of colour can win.

The Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP fielded 143 visible minority and 44 Indigenous candidates in this election. That compares to the 64 visible minority and 23 Indigenous candidates nominated by the same three parties in advance of the 2011 election. The number of candidates of colour thus more than doubled in just one electoral cycle, though we should bear in mind that 30 more electoral districts existed in the 2015 contest. The large number of ridings without incumbent candidates undoubtedly widened the pipeline for new political entrants. Visible minority MPs were more likely than others to run in ridings without an incumbent (34% of visible minority MPs ran in so-called open ridings, compared to 27% of white MPs and 20% of Indigenous MPs). Given the advantage of incumbency in Canadian politics, running in a riding that does not include a sitting MP is a considerable electoral advantage. Of the visible minority candidates who were elected, 85% were non-incumbents, compared to 59% of white candidates.

When political parties make an effort to recruit and nominate diverse candidates and do so in ridings where the party is competitive, those candidates can—and do—win. We should celebrate the inclusion of diverse faces in the House of Commons, but remain conscious of the ways in which their pathways to politics can be obstructed. Although it is beyond the scope of this analysis, we should also examine the positions that MPs of colour occupy on committees, within caucus, and in Cabinet. Presence is important, but influence matters most. Above all, in spite of the representational gains that have been made, they are in some cases small, meaning we still have some way to go to achieve a truly representative democracy.

Third Parties in the 2015 Federal Election: Partying like It's 1988?



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Third-party spending has been the focus of much attention over the last couple decades. While policy debates go back to the 1970s, the estimated $4.7 million spent by third parties during the 1988 federal election was what first raised serious questions concerning the harms of unrestricted spending by persons or groups who participate in elections, other than a political candidate, registered political party, or constituency association. A Royal Commission and several Supreme Court cases later, the question of how third parties should be regulated has reached a point of relative policy stability. Since the 2004 federal election, third parties have operated under relatively modest spending limits during the official campaign period: $150,000, of which no more than $3,000 can be used to promote or oppose the election of candidates in a particular electoral district. This number is adjusted for both inflation and election length such that for the 2015 federal election third parties were permitted to spend approximately $430,000.

Interestingly, these modest limits have been followed with even humbler spending. With only a few exceptions, third parties over the last several elections have not maximized their spending, nor have they participated in large numbers. In the 2011 election, 55 third parties spent a total of $1.2 million, in comparison to the approximately $67 million spent by political parties. However, a shift, and a potentially important one at that, appears to have occurred with the 2015 election: 1) a record number of groups and individuals registered as third parties (110 as of October 19), and 2) some third parties, like Engage Canada and Conservative Voice, appeared to engage in strategic election spending by beginning their advertising prior to the August 2 writ-drop, bypassing spending limits altogether.

Because third parties have up to four months after election day to report their campaign spending and have no obligation to report spending that occurred prior to the writ drop, it is nearly impossible to estimate third-party spending so soon after the election. However, some preliminary observations are possible based on the list of registered third parties and their publicised activities during the campaign.

Our first step is to identify which actors decided to put themselves forward as third parties. Of the 110 registered third parties, six are individuals, four represent business interests, 31 are unions or labour associations, and 69 are interest advocacy organizations (mostly non-partisan, either incorporated or struck only for the purpose of this campaign). We can also get a sense of where these parties are located: more than three-quarters are listed in Ontario (48 out of 110) or British Columbia (41 out of 110). Interestingly, some of the third-party advertisers that gained the most traction in the media, such as Working Canadians and Engage Canada, are not on the registered list. Despite their activity in the pre-writ period, these two groups opted to either forego or limit their campaign spending to less than the $500 registration threshold.

A second step for understanding third-party advertising in the 2015 election is to look at third parties in light of their stated interests. Some third parties are allied (in intent, though not formally) with the goals of political parties, while others are focussed on advocating for particular issues. Motivations for participating likely differ for these groups, but in any case, the outcomes frequently

appear quite similar. Advertising by the former can be leveraged to the advantage of one party (though any formal attempt to do so would be collusion, which is illegal under the Elections Act). While uncoordinated, such alliances can hardly go unnoticed. Engage Canada's radio advertising specifically referenced "Harper and the Conservatives," connecting them to big business. Even HarperPAC's pro-Conservative advertising made few friends in the party, with party officials rumoured to be furious about unsanctioned ads undoing elements of the party's communication strategy.

The same is theoretically true of issue-based third parties. Take the recently debated Trans-Pacific Partnership deal. Registered third party and automotive-sector labour group UNIFOR spoke out forcefully against the deal. While some interest groups and parties will inevitably have overlapping views on campaign issues, connections are often fodder for critics. The UNIFOR case is no exception: prior to the writ-drop, Stephen Harper mused that he was "quite sure that the NDP [was] working very closely with those unions and their ads."

The 2015 election may indeed raise concerns similar to those of the 1988 "free trade" election despite there now being firm spending limits in place. That said, the increased participation by third parties in this campaign is arguably as much a cause for celebration as concern. Even so, that some third parties chose to spend large sums prior to the regulated campaign period, and are doing so in a way that may overlap with party goals, suggests that the current policy framework may need to be revisited.

Organized Interests Strike Back!

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Organized interests in Canada no doubt shelled out a record amount to influence the latest federal election. And unfortunately, we may never know how much. Indeed, one of the key distinctive features of this election was the visibility that political action committees such as HarperPAC, Engage Canada, and Working Canadians gained in the months prior to the official election period. More common in the United States, political action committees (PACs) are broad coalitions that pool campaign contributions from members to endorse or oppose political candidates or specific issues. Through political action committees, special interests (like corporations, labour unions, and even private individuals) can spend millions of dollars on television and radio ads to further their position on specific issues or industry, none of which is required to be reported. As a result, they are a new vehicle for organized interests, that have only recently been strictly banned from making donations in Canada. Their growing presence promises to usher in a new era in Canadian politics.

Third-party spending outside of the electoral period is not new. However, election laws in Canada ban corporate and union donations to political parties and candidates. Furthermore, individual and third-party annual donations are limited in an effort to keep the electoral process fair and transparent. In addition, spending by political parties and third-party supporters is strictly limited once the writ is dropped. As a result, organized interests have to find new ways to influence politics. With fixed election dates now implemented, they can start their advertising campaigns early and take advantage of the months leading up to the official electoral period in order to sway voters. Although they cannot assist the campaign directly, PACs can help consolidate early party leads and help frame the dominant narrative at the start of the campaign.

The issue of the role of PACs in Canadian elections surfaced when a group called HarperPAC emerged on the scene in June. The overt reference to Harper in the name made it difficult to distinguish it from the political party, raising concerns regarding the independence of the PAC. It was rapidly shut down after public efforts from the Conservative Party to distance itself from the organization. Nevertheless, a debate on the place of PACs in Canadian politics was launched.

Some argue that organized interests can circumvent rules regarding the amounts that can be spent in a political campaign and thus undermine the democratic process. Others counter that as long as the integrity of the official electoral period is protected, then PACs are operating within the current legislative framework. They are simply exercising their freedom of speech—one of the many actors who could add their voice to the democratic debate.

What is clear from the latest election result is that the influence of the early advertising campaign eroded over time, as illustrated by the movement in the polls. The fact that this was one of the longest election periods in Canadian history certainly helped limit the ability of PACs to sway voters. However, the future role of PACs in Canadian politics shouldn't be judged simply on their apparent ability to influence public opinion. We need to remember that millions of dollars are being spent behind their ads, both on the left and the right of the political spectrum. Within shorter election timeframes, the impact these organizations have may start to materialize in electoral outcomes.

Furthermore, political action committees can have a polarizing effect

on our electoral debates. While one would expect PACs to form along ideological lines, the 2015 pre-electoral period witnessed the establishment of GreenPAC, a single-issue committee formed to champion environmental issues. If PACs continue to grow as a vehicle for political influence, it is likely that we may see a greater number of these single-issue organized interests and the rise of political activism centered around single issues could increase dramatically. In such a way, organized interests could take advantage of wedge issues and partisan conflict.

The rising influence of PACs in Canadian politics has the potential to distort the democratic process in favour of wealthier and more powerful interests. This practice stands in clear contrast to the spirit of current campaign finance laws that restrict the ability of interest groups to make contributions to national electoral campaigns and to engage in political advertising. If we want to preserve the integrity of the democratic process, we need clarity and transparency with regards to the politics of influence, or else Canadians' basic democratic values will be undermined.

Les syndicats en campagne contre Harper

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L'implication des syndicats durant les campagnes électorales n'est pas chose nouvelle, et le scrutin de 2015 n'a pas fait exception. Au contraire, l'engagement syndical semble même avoir été particulièrement fort cette fois-ci puisque vingt-huit organisations syndicales se sont enregistrées comme tierces parties auprès d'Élections Canada, de loin le chiffre le plus élevé des quatre dernières élections générales. Parmi elles se trouvent à la fois de grandes structures nationales telles l'Alliance de la fonction publique du Canada (AFPC), le Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique (SCFP) ou le Congrès du travail du Canada (CTC), mais aussi des organisations d'envergure provinciale ou même locale.

C'est la vigueur des attaques menées contre eux par le gouvernement fédéral dans les dernières années qui a poussé les syndicats à s'impliquer si ouvertement dans la campagne. Ceux de la fonction publique fédérale en avaient non seulement contre les coupures imposées par Ottawa, mais aussi contre les changements à leur régime de négociation collective ou encore le resserrement des règles d'accréditation syndicale. Par ailleurs, tous les syndicats au pays, même ceux de juridiction provinciale, ont été touchés par la loi C-377 leur imposant la remise d'un rapport financier annuel et sapant indirectement la légitimité de leurs actions politiques.

Les stratégies engagées par les différents syndicats ont été variées. La plus visible fut sans doute celle de l'AFPC. Représentant la grande majorité des fonctionnaires fédéraux, celle-ci a consacré cinq millions de dollars à sa campagne « Stoppons l'hémorragie » qui a cherché à souligner l'impact des coupures engagées par le gouvernement Harper sur la qualité des services offerts par la fonction publique fédérale. Déployée tant sur les médias sociaux que par affichage et dans les médias traditionnels, elle a commencé dès le mi-juillet et s'est poursuivie jusqu'à la tenue du scrutin.

Plus modeste, la campagne « Votez pour les services publics » de l'Institut de la fonction publique du Canada (IFPC), qui représente les professionnels du gouvernement du Canada, a porté un message similaire à celui de l'AFPC. Elle a surtout été visible en ligne et par quelques affichages ciblés.

Le CTC, qui porte la voix de la grande majorité des syndicats au pays, a opté pour une campagne axée sur les enjeux socio-économiques (emploi, retraite, santé, services à l'enfance) et invitant la population à voter « pour un meilleur choix », mais sans indiquer ouvertement duquel il s'agissait. Le message fut plus explicite du côté du SCFP, le plus grand syndicat au pays, qui a soutenu ouvertement le Nouveau Parti démocratique (NPD).

Une fois encore, le mouvement syndical canadien fut donc partagé entre un appel au vote stratégique afin de battre les conservateurs et un soutien au NPD. Ce débat n'a toutefois pas créé autant de remous qu'en 2006, alors qu'un des principaux dirigeants syndicaux du pays avait explicitement appelé à voter libéral dans certaines circonscriptions pour bloquer le Parti conservateur. Il semble qu'après dix ans de régime Harper, les syndicats aient été plus enclins à opter pour le vote stratégique, quitte à ne pas le faire en faveur de leur allié traditionnel, le NPD. L'avance du NPD dans les sondages en début de campagne faisait toutefois en sorte que celui-ci se trouvait pour une rare fois à bénéficier des appels au vote stratégique.

Au Québec, les syndicats ne sont généralement pas traversés par ces états d'âme. Plusieurs organisations, dont la Confédération des syndicats

Les syndicats en campagne contre Harper

nationaux (CSN), ne peuvent statutairement se prononcer en faveur d'un parti politique. Ceci n'a par contre pas empêché la CSN de faire activement campagne contre le Parti conservateur auprès de ses membres, que ce soit dans ses publications ou par le biais des interventions publiques de ses dirigeants.

La plus grande surprise est sans doute venue de la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) qui avait toujours soutenu le Bloc québécois depuis sa fondation, à une exception près. Cette fois-ci, la FTQ a non seulement décidé d'opter pour le vote stratégique contre Harper mais de concentrer ses efforts dans dix circonscriptions du Québec en appuyant le candidat qui avait le plus de chances de battre les conservateurs. La volonté de renverser Harper l'a emporté sur les allégeances partisanes traditionnelles. Cette position inattendue de la FTQ fut décrite dans les médias comme une tuile dans la campagne difficile du Bloc au Québec. Elle a aussi conduit Thomas Mulcair à interpréter cet appel de la centrale syndicale comme un appui tacite au NPD, malgré les explications données par la FTQ elle-même.

Il est toujours difficile d'évaluer l'impact des campagnes syndicales sur le résultat du vote, même s'il est raisonnable de penser qu'il fut plus fort au sein de leur membership que dans le reste de la population. Se réjouissant ouvertement de la défaite conservatrice, le mouvement syndical se chargera au cours des quatre prochaines années de rappeler au nouveau gouvernement libéral plusieurs de ses engagements, en particulier celui d'abroger la loi C-377. Mais par ces campagnes les syndicats ont surtout souligné qu'ils avaient encore un rôle à jouer en politique, une fonction que les conservateurs ont justement constamment cherché à leur contester.

Public Servants, Political Activity, and "Harperman"

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Most Canadians would be hard pressed to remember most, if any of the political parties' campaign songs used to boost energy at campaign events and bookend speeches across the country. Though, there is one song from the 2015 campaign that may still be ringing in the ears of some Canadians: "Harperman."

Tony Turner, then a public servant working as a scientist at Environment Canada, attracted international attention with his "Harperman" YouTube music video. It is a trenchant critique of then Prime Minister Harper's governance approach and policies. It features a folksy laundry list of complaints along with a chorus that makes crystal clear Turner's disdain for the Conservative governing party and Prime Minister Harper:

We want you gone (gone, gone)
You and your pawn (pawn, pawns)
No more con (con, cons)
Time to move on (on, on)
Get out of town (town, town)
Don't want you round (round, round)
Harperman, it's time for you to go.

With 730,000 views and a cross-country sing-along on September 17, "Harperman" shines a light on an important facet of Canadian governance: the political activities deemed either permissible or out of bounds for our nation's public servants. It reveals an interesting tension between the fundamental rights for public servants, as Canadian citizens, and their duties and obligations as professional, non-partisan, and loyal servants to the Government of Canada. Where are the lines to be drawn between a worker's basic Charter rights and the duties of a public servant? Did "Harperman" cross a line, given that it was led by a public servant? The short answer is yes, the longer answer is, it's complicated.

Over the years, the Supreme Court of Canada has wrestled with questions of public service political activity. The landmark 1991 decision in Osborne v. Canada is particularly noteworthy. A group of public servants challenged the existing prohibitions on political activity arguing they violated public servants' freedom of expression and freedom of association under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court agreed, finding that the existing provisions were too broad and struck them down. This opened the door for most public servants (save for the most senior appointments) to engage in a variety of political activities, for example, volunteering on election campaigns and posting political lawn signs. Yet, the courts have also found that public servants owe a duty of loyalty to the Government of Canada, and therein lies the rub. As well, the 1991 decision pre-dates the ability of a dissatisfied public servant to upload a video that can be accessed by an audience of hundreds of thousands and replayed in mainstream news.

Canada's Public Service Employment Act (PSEA), its Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector, and the oath that all public servants take upon assuming office all include provisions that compel public servants to carry out their duties in a non-partisan and impartial manner and "loyally" serve the Government of Canada. Loyalty is, however, not absolute and the Government of Canada's guidance on the matter points to three situations that may result in an exception to the duty of loyalty, including if:

- the Government is engaged in illegal acts;

- government policies jeopardize life, health or safety; or
- the public servant's criticism has no impact on the ability to perform effectively the duties of a public servant or on the public perception of that ability.

While Turner may argue that "Harperman" does not affect his ability to perform effectively, perception is as important as reality. "Harperman" is highly problematic because it involves a public servant publicly rebuking the government of the day, and actively calling for the replacement of a government, and prime minister. Measured against the three criteria above it is likely that Turner would have faced disciplinary action, if not dismissal. His resignation before the conclusion of the investigation into a potential conflict of interest means we will never know for sure. While this is an isolated and rare instance of explicit political protest by a public servant, the potential damage to the institution of the public service will likely outlast Turner's sense of personal satisfaction and 15 minutes of fame. Charter rights are paramount but not absolute. The public service oath, its core values, and Canada's fundamental governance arrangement require real and perceptively fair, impartial, and loyal public servants, regardless of whichever party forms government. Within the boundaries of the law, the public service must march to the tune of a democratically elected drummer.

All About Strong Alliances: First Nations Engagement in the Federal Election

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For many members of First Nations communities, the basic rights of First Nations and the protection of their environment were at stake in the 2015 Canadian federal election. The thought of another Conservative majority was too much to bear for many of them.

To prevent this Conservative majority from happening, First Nations and like-minded Canadians used the alliances they forged under the Idle No More movement to rally the vote against this possibility. Idle No More was the largest social movement Canada has ever seen. For over six months in 2013, it captured media headlines around the world. To members of this movement, Stephen Harper's focus on security was based on a campaign of fear, not facts. The Conservative government's Anti-Terrorism Act (Bill C-51) had the potential to make Canadians terrorists for merely expressing their dissent. The result was public outcry from many segments of society, including some former prime ministers, former Supreme Court of Canada justices, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) officials, lawyers and academics. How Bill C-51 might be used to supress another Idle No More movement was a source of concern.

Throughout the campaign, the Conservative Party chose not to address the rising incarceration rates of First Nations, the 1,200 murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls from over the past 30 years, or the thousands of Indigenous children in care. There was similarly no plan for the 120 First Nations without clean water, the many who die from preventable diseases, or the thousands without housing or education. Prime Minister Harper's response during a CBC interview in December 2014 regarding an inquiry on murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls was, by many, interpreted as a synopsis of how little his party cared for the plight of members of First Nations communities: "It's not high on our radar, to be honest." His position during the campaign on this important issue would not change, despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, which included a call for an inquiry.

The Tories also all but ignored a looming crisis facing Canada, and a matter of importance to many members of First Nations communities: climate change. During the Conservative tenure, Canada withdrew from the Kyoto Accord to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enacted Bills C-45 and C-38, which ended protections for many waterways and reduced environmental evaluation and public consultative processes. The potentially catastrophic consequences for future generations were not something that many members of the First Nations movement would accept. However, it is important to note that this was never a partisan issue. Those First Nations who do vote have voted for different parties at different times, at both federal and provincial levels. In this election, there were a few First Nations candidates running for the Conservative Party. The issue was more about Harper's control over the party and its ideological orientation.

It seems like the Idle No More movement regrouped during the 2015 election campaign. Numerous civil society groups, First Nations communities, and grassroots groups banned together and used every opportunity to engage with the public through lectures, community meetings, house visits, mail-outs, and media commentary. Numerous conference calls and strategy sessions were held with diverse groups all over Canada. First Nations and various organizations like

the Council of Canadians, The David Suzuki Foundation, Amnesty International, and many others, including unions, youth groups, students, lawyers, academics, scientists, environmentalists, and a wide range of social justice activists, collectively used social media to engage with Canadians of all ages with reports, analyses, videos, webcasts, commentaries and fact sheets. This was a historic example of a peaceful, but powerful movement of members of First Nations communities and other like-minded Canadians to get rid of a government.

However, there was debate within First Nations communities about whether they should vote or not. Many members of First Nations traditionally do not participate in federal elections because they identify as members of sovereign nations rather than as Canadian citizens. In 2015, many still felt the same way about voting, but were so adamant about getting rid of the Conservative government that they felt they should vote. Controversy arose within communities when the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) National Chief, Perry Bellegarde, flip-flopped during the campaign on whether he would vote or not and on his commitment that the AFN would remain non-partisan. Yet, the movement for change was so strong that First Nations grassroots organizations and community either "rocked the Indigenous vote" or mobilized their Canadian allies to do so.

While it is important to note that all parties have had a hand in the dispossession and oppression of First Nations, Harper's administration was particularly rough. But Canada has changed. Its people, First Nations and Canadians alike, worked together for change both within the election process, in terms of voting, and outside that process, in terms of public education and mobilization. It remains to be seen what that change will look like, but at the moment there is a sense of optimism that the new Liberal government may afford First Nations peoples, the environment, and Canadians more just treatment than the outgoing Conservative administration did.

Struggles and Opportunites for Issues Advocacy: The Case of The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

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Elections provide unique opportunities for non-profit organizations to bring public attention to their issues and to influence political-party platforms. The focus on image over issue in the media coverage of the 2015 campaign significantly impacted this dynamic. In the case of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU), despite a well-executed strategy, the political and media attention surrounding the issue of health care remained wanting. However, social media and targeted audience engagement provided alternative opportunities for CFNU to influence public dialogue around the issue.

Issue advocacy is an important communication function for many non-profit organizations. Outside of election periods, most non-profit advocacy is unrestricted. Charities are the exception, operating under the strict guidelines of the Income Tax Act. During federal elections, once the writ is dropped, non-profits must restrict their spending to less than $500, as prescribed by Elections Canada, for activities that "promote or oppose a registered party or the election of a candidate, including one that takes the position on an issue with which a registered party or candidate is associated." Messages posted freely (social media, third-party websites, earned media) are not included. Most non-profit organizations with limited budgets and activities remain within the $500 limit. Organizations with deeper pockets and wanting to underwrite a more expansive and impactful issues advocacy campaign, like CFNU, must register as a "third party" with Elections Canada. These organizations may spend up to $150,000 on election communication (adjusted for inflation and the length of election periods beyond 37 days). Restrictions on the amount spent in any one electoral district also apply.

For non-profit organizations wanting to influence political agendas, election campaigns are important opportunities for action given that future policy makers (i.e. candidates) are mostly accessible for issues discussion and are reactive to public opinion and political messaging. Much of this advocacy flows through media forums. Agenda-setting theory holds that the issues that become prioritized by the media influence what candidates, parties and the electorate later accept to be important issues. The electorate reinforces these priorities in their discussions with candidates on their doorsteps or in local forums, which then get reinforced with party leadership. The more grassroots and sustained the media interest in an issue, the higher the likelihood that candidates and parties will take a position on the issue and incorporate that position into their platform during the election and in their governing mandate.

CFNU's #Vote4Care initiative was a comprehensive, effectively strategized and well-executed issues advocacy campaign. Launched during National Nurses week, #Vote4Care sought to put health care on political and public agendas and to connect government health-care cuts with nurses' workplaces (CFNU, personal communication, October 16). The campaign was extensive and multi-faceted. It included a website, paid radio advertisements, paid social-media advertisements, professional videos and infographics, Facebook promotions and selfie shares, Twitter campaigns, twibbons, op-eds, and directed communication to member organizations

and nursing workplaces around the country. The messaging was poignant, accessible, and clearly articulated the need for citizens to vote for better health care and to hold candidates accountable. CFNU also live tweeted health-care issues during the Munk Debate and hosted a tweet-up. Nearing election day, CFNU released a performance report of each party's position on health care. To promote media coverage, it pursued and pitched news stories, provided spokespeople, and offered media kits made up of research and background materials on the campaign and the issues.

Media coverage of the 2015 election paid scant attention to issues. Instead, coverage was dominated by poll tracking, character assessments, and stories about the gaffes and personalities of party leaders and candidates. These priorities offered few opportunities for non-profit advocates to influence media and party agendas; therefore, health care was a lost political issue in the campaign. Only a smattering of news stories reported on it in any depth, and few mentioned CFNU. All four parties made summary announcements about health care but there was little meaningful discussion surrounding the issue or CFNUs position on the campaign trail.

Yet, the #Vote4Care campaign was not without impact. Sidestepping the mainstream media, it communicated directly to the electorate on the issues through extensive paid advertisements and targeted and social-media networking. While direct correlations are problematic, the contribution of these efforts to public sentiments that prioritize health care cannot be discounted. CFNU also mobilized the nursing community to become engaged and advocate for health care to local candidates. And they effectively positioned themselves as an important stakeholder in future political discussions surrounding health care.

As media agendas prioritized images over issues in the 2015 election, effective advocates turned to other forums to raise and debate important political issues. The impact achieved by the #Vote4Care campaign suggests that the agenda-setting authority of mainstream media is no longer absolute. For non-profit advocates who, despite best efforts, struggle to garner media attention this may be a welcome opportunity.

Mobile News: The 2015 Election via News Apps

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Dr. Francoli's research looks at the relationship between digital media and issues related to politics and governance. While this is a large and diverse field, most of her research has focused on the way that digital media has impacted three broad areas: citizen engagement and mobilization, governance, and access to information and data. She is a leading researcher in the field of open government and open data. Her recent publications include (with A. Clarke), "What's in a name? Questioning the homogeneity of 'open government' programs across seven countries," *Journal of e-Democracy and Open Government* 6, no.1 (2014).

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We know that the news media plays an important role in helping citizens to make an informed decision at the ballot box. However, we know little about the impact of mobile media on election coverage, or the impact of the architecture of various news applications—or apps—on the ability of users to stay informed during the election campaign. Understanding this is important given that the way that Canadians consume election coverage is changing as mobile media increases in popularity. The majority of Canadians access the Internet via a mobile device. Today, 68% of Canadians use smartphones and that number is projected to rise. Tablets are also becoming commonplace and are now used by over half of Canadians with Internet access. News consumption is one of the top five activities of tablet users in Canada. Media consumption habits have changed so significantly that Montreal-based daily *La Presse* announced plans to stop its print edition with the exception of Saturday, noting that its tablet subscriptions are doubled its print subscriptions.

This analysis offers some early insight into the question: How was the 2015 federal election presented in mobile media? It looks at the freely available news apps of four major daily papers in Canada: *The Toronto Star*'s Star Touch, *The Globe and Mail*'s Globe and Mail, *The National Post*'s National Post Mobile, and *La Presse*'s La Presse +. Content of each of the four apps was monitored daily during the two week period preceding the election, from October 5 to October 18. Election-related content was tracked and coded in relation to the percentage of overall news content, and efforts were made to identify the percentage of unique content—content that had not appeared on other days or on multiple occasions on the same day—on a daily basis. Attention was also paid to the architecture of the apps to see how election coverage was built in, or not, as the case may be.

The findings point to a fairly wide discrepancy in the design, or architecture, of the apps. Of the four, *The Globe and Mail* was the only app to have a built in button, or explicit category, for Election 2015 in its regular menu. The architecture of *La Presse+* is such that its menu changes daily, but the election was not a category in the two weeks prior to the election. However, it does have a news feed, En Direct, which had a regular menu featuring the election on a daily basis. There was no clear location for election-specific coverage for either the *Star Touch* app or for *The National Post Mobile* app. This is not to say the content was not there, but it was more sporadically built into other general categories.

An analysis of the content found on the apps in the two weeks preceding the election points to some correlation between architecture and content. *The Globe and Mail*'s app was the only app to build a category for the election

Election Content on Four Major News Apps (October 5 to 18, 2015)

	The Globe and Mail	La Presse+	National Post Mobile	Star Touch
Total election content	803 (33%)	201 (12%)	258 (10%)	150 (12%)
Unique election content	285 (12%)	165 (9%)	111 (4%)	145 (11%)
Total app content (n)	2429 (100%)	1741 (100%)	2551 (100%)	1303 (100%)

directly into its menu. As can be seen in the table below, it also had a dramatically higher total percentage of election related content then the other apps. However, it also had the highest amount of content that was either repeated frequently across days or across multiple categories in the app.

When looking at percentage of unique content, *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star* apps are fairly similar. The *Star Touch* app, however, presented the least amount of repeated content.

While similar studies would help to verify the findings, this preliminary analysis does signal the importance of app architecture. Design has the potential to influence what users learn about the election. Those that relied primarily on *The Globe and Mail*'s app during the 2015 federal election had content presented to them in a very direct and repetitive manner compared to those who may have turned to the other apps. Users of any of the apps had varying degrees of election coverage delivered to them in a format that they could read virtually anytime anywhere. However, as the findings indicate, those with a desire to be most informed should not rely on one source, in this case, one app, alone.

Thinking Outside the Box: TV News Broadcasting during the 2015 General Election

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The signals that the 2015 general election would be different for Canadian broadcasters were transmitted from the moment that Parliament was dissolved.

Initially, a single camera operator and producer were sent out to cover the Conservative leader's tour, the tiniest of technical crews, working for TV networks that had pooled their scant resources. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party announced that it would not participate in "consortium" debates traditionally organized and broadcast by the main national TV networks, choosing to negotiate with new players instead. Throughout the campaign, the legacy broadcasters continued experimenting with new ways to captivate their fragmented audiences while facing an ever-widening field of competitors (journalistic and political) in the digital sphere.

These shifts are all part of an election campaign that saw the broadcast news media in a period of transition and evolution. Innovation is a necessity for an industry that is under incredible economic pressure with dispersed publics and declining ad revenues. The industry is also responding to another kind of pressure linked inextricably to political marketing—a party fixation with news management that places stifling limits on journalists.

The economic reality for broadcasters (for all news media for that matter), manifested itself in how they decided to cover the leaders' tours, which are normally the centrepiece of the traditional media's coverage of an election campaign. The total cost of roughly $50,000-$70,000 per person per campaign (before taxes) to join a leader's tour was staggering. The Conservative Party's rate of $70,000 was the highest because they began the leaders' tour in August and because it encompassed the entire 11 weeks; a per-week rate was proportionately higher. The TV pool members—CBC/Radio Canada, CTV, Global, TVA and CPAC—decided to cover the Conservatives with a single camera operator, capturing the "head on" shot of the leader for the first few weeks, expanding to include a second camera and sound operator later. The use of new technology, specifically the portable, Canadian-made Dejero transmitter, enabled networks to further cover the tour without always relying on satellite trucks and their crews. As for journalists, only the CBC/Radio-Canada and CTV sent a national political reporter regularly on the road with the leaders while other networks sent in regional representatives when the campaigns swung within reach of their bureaus.

For decades, media critics have scrutinized the homogenous coverage of the leaders' tour and how it siphons away attention from issues that are important to voters. The Conservative Party's particular control of where camera operators can roam and how many questions Stephen Harper would answer in a day (four national, one local), in the name of political message discipline, has caused even more soul searching. Is this truly the best way to tell the story of an election campaign, particularly when parties themselves are live broadcasting events using social media?

The skeleton TV crews on the leaders' tour left broadcasters with room to explore other, more citizen-centred options for covering the election campaign. Some of the broadcasters significantly beefed up their online offering, with tools and content specifically designed to help voters sort

through party policies. Global ran a regular "Reality Check" segment to test out the claims of leaders and also sent three national reporters across the country to do feature stories on policy issues and on interesting riding battles. CBC's *The National* ran a nightly feature on individual voters and their preoccupations. CPAC did a laudable job talking to candidates and voters in 69 ridings. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) featured extensive campaign coverage, including town halls on First Nations issues with the Liberal, NDP, and Green party leaders.

Campaign 2015 also saw the first real forays into election coverage by new digital broadcasters. When the Conservatives pulled out of the consortium debates, YouTube/Google Canada stepped into the vacuum by transmitting debates organized by *Maclean's* magazine and *The Globe and Mail*. This gradual detaching from the tightly scripted and controlled leaders' tours (even if it was out of financial necessity), plus the input of new broadcast players, is cause for optimism that campaign coverage is breaking out of the old box.

Still, there's plenty to reflect on before the next scheduled federal election in 2019. Obsessive reporting on public opinion polls sucked up journalistic resources and broadcast minutes that could have been spent delving deeper into policy issues, informing voters, and holding politicians accountable—important democratic roles that political journalists fulfil. If the broadcasting system is supposed to support the "enhancement of national identity," as per the *Broadcasting Act*, an assessment is required of whether the five national debates held during this campaign reached enough Canadians. Finally, broadcasters should consider whether they took enough advantage of the dollars saved by not covering the leaders' tours (or sending fewer reporters) and adequately cover critical policy issues that Canadians keep saying they care about—health care, for one. Did reporters interact with enough individual citizens, both in person and through social media? The Syrian refugee crisis proved that the broadcast news media can focus squarely on what audiences care about, and force Canadian politicians to respond, rather than the other way around.

Leaders' Debates in a Post-Broadcast Democracy

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The 2015 federal campaign not only showed that Canadian television networks are less authoritative than they once were, it also highlighted the lack of balance between the various interests of the media and political parties on the one hand and the value of democratic citizenship on the other. The leaders' debates were once unique moments during which otherwise competing networks joined forces to hold appealing campaign events. In 2015, these encounters between leaders reached fewer citizens. The benefit of leaders' debates to Canadian democracy has declined.

Aside from minor changes in each campaign, Canada's television network consortium (CBC, CTV, Global, Radio-Canada, and TVA) has typically broadcast two televised debates—one in each official language—in every federal campaign since 1984. These were attractive events that had large audiences and significant impacts on citizens' assessment of the leaders, vote intention, and vote choice.[1]

The 2015 campaign broke with this 30-year tradition. Five leaders' debates—two in English, two in French, and one bilingual—were held by separate organizations. These changes occurred because of pressures from corporate and party interests. Furthermore, political posturing resulted in the leaders of the Green and Bloc Québécois parties not being invited to most debates, and to some other debates not proceeding.

First, Québecor-owned TVA decided to leave the consortium and invite the party leaders to its own debate (October 2), the format of which allowed more time for duelling instead of open debate among all participants. This format differentiated TVA's debate from the one held by Radio-Canada (September 24). Québecor's news media heavily promoted it as the most revealing format.

Second, new stakeholders made proposals to the parties, in competition with those of the English-language media of the consortium. Following lengthy discussions over these debates that went public well before the election call, the Conservative Party announced, in May 2015, its preference for these new proposals. The parties eventually agreed to take part in debates held by *Maclean's* (August 6), *The Globe and Mail* (September 17) and the Munk Debates (September 28). Publicity for these debates was increased through online streaming on these organizations' websites or mobile apps, in addition to partnerships with certain cable channels, especially CPAC (a channel that focuses mostly on parliamentary activities, similar to C-SPAN in the United States). This was a striking departure from the traditional broadcasting strategy.

These English-language debates clearly challenged the authoritative voice of the largest Canadian television networks. More importantly, however, that they were not simultaneously broadcast on CBC, CTV, and Global significantly diminished their appeal. For instance, *Maclean's* claimed that 4.3 million Canadians tuned in for its debate, of whom 3.8 million watched on the cable networks CPAC, City TV, and OMNI, with an average audience of 1.5 million. By comparison, the 2011

1 For instance: Richard Johnston et al., *Letting the People Decide: The Dynamics of a Canadian Election*, Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992; André Blais and Martin Boyer, "Assessing the Impact of Televised Debates: The Case of the 1988 Canadian Election," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no.2, 1996: 143-164; André Blais et al., "Campaign Dynamics in the 2000 Canadian Election: How the Leader Debates Salvaged the Conservative Party," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 36, no.1, 2003: 45-50; André Blais and Andrea M. L. Perrella, "Systemic Effects of Televised Leaders' Debates," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13, no.4, 2008: 451-464.

English-language debate attracted 10.6 million viewers, with an average per-minute audience of 3.85 million. *The Globe and Mail* and Munk debates were broadcast only on CPAC and online.

Markus Prior's award-winning book *Post-Broadcast Democracy* presents evidence that once freed from the programming schedule of the TV networks (thanks to cable TV and Internet), citizens are more likely to switch to programs that more closely match their preferences. Political junkies expose themselves to much more information on public affairs than previously, but most citizens switch to more entertaining shows.

As a consequence, in a high-choice media environment, a substantial proportion of citizens have lower political knowledge and are less likely to vote on election day than in a low-choice one.[2]

While the traditional format of the leaders' debates would not have fully counteracted this phenomenon, it is conceivable that Canadian democratic citizenship has suffered from the failure of the consortium to gather the party leaders for a debate with a potentially much larger viewership. Media stakeholders and political parties will always fight for their own interests, but who will stand up for citizenship?

2. Markus Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The "New Normal" of Mediatization and Narrowcasting

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Linda Trimble has been analyzing women's representation in Canadian governments and media representations of women politicians since 1989. She has two major projects in the works right now. One is a book on news coverage of women prime ministers in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, and the other examines *The Globe and Mail* coverage of Canadian party leadership candidates. Shannon Sampert and Linda Trimble have recently authored, with Angelia Wagner and Bailey Gerrits, "Jumping the Shark: Mediatization of Canadian Party Leadership Contests, 1975—2012," *Journalism Practice* 8, no. 3 (2014).

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There is a heavily mediatized "new normal" of campaign politics in Canada. On September 30, 2015, the Conservative Party of Canada issued a press release pledging to double Canada's panda population by 2016. The party offered a photo of leader Stephen Harper and his wife, Laureen, snuggling with one of the cuddly mammals. The pledge, complete with photo, was delivered straight into the laps of voters by major news organizations across the country, including *The Globe and Mail*, CTV, and the *Ottawa Citizen*. With the ready-made photo-op and sky-high cute factor, how could the media resist punning about the "Conservatives playing panda politics," and "pandering to the electorate?"

Then there was an announcement from Liberal leader Justin Trudeau that his party was providing tax breaks for teachers who use their own money to buy school supplies. Meanwhile the NDP promised Canadians fifteen-dollar-a-day daycare. All of these campaign promises and policies are examples of how focused and targeted the messages increasingly are, all pledged with an eye toward re-election, and packaged in a manner that makes it easy for news organizations to reproduce the material at little expense.

That the major political parties sometimes adopted bizarre sales pitches to attract attention during the campaign is not surprising. In a mediatized political environment, the practice of politics is embedded within a media frame, shaped by market logic. Market logic is all about buying and selling, and in the electoral context, political parties are selling products to voters. To get their message across they package their policies in the form of information subsidies to the media. The Conservative strategy for Election 2015 epitomized market logic. By staging an extra-long campaign, avoiding the traditional debate format in favour of a series of narrow-casted specialized debates, exercising an extraordinary level of message control, adapting their messages to social-media platforms, and embracing key elements of the permanent campaign, the Conservatives' efforts have come to epitomize a "new normal" for electioneering.

This is problematic for democracy. The emphasis of political parties and the media on simple and narrow concepts is a shift away from informing and engaging voters at a deeper and more substantive level. During election campaigns, parties and news organizations are more focused on spinning and framing than on fostering democratic dialogue and debate. As such, mediatization denudes political discourse of substantive attention to policy ideas and programmatic differences. In its stead, voters are offered ephemeral narratives about leadership, strength, hope and change. Consider the campaign slogans of the opposition parties. While the NDP was "ready for change," the Liberals guaranteed "real change." Both of them pitched to the mythical middle class, a catch-all category constructed to include most Canadians. At the same time, all three major parties presented boutique policy announcements that had little to do with the overall public good and everything to do with getting elected.

Mediatization in this election campaign was assisted greatly by microtargeting, the use of data mining to determine pockets of support available for wooing with specific policy announcements. It is why service-club memberships became a tax credit promise from the Conservatives. Who belongs to service clubs?

The "New Normal" of Mediatization and Narrowcasting

Predominantly people over the age of 45, entrepreneurs, urbanites with long-term roots in their community—target demographics that turn out to vote.

The Conservatives used microtargeting on their way to victory in 2011, increasing their number of seats in vote-rich by Ontario in particular. In 2015, all three parties practiced microtargeting with their own database systems. Information captured on the ground from volunteers armed with little more than a smartphone and an app was integrated with intelligence gathered by the central campaign. This was used to match electors with policy promises and to send targeted messages by email and social media, bypassing the filter of the mainstream media.

Mediatization and microtargeting help explain why Stephen Harper and his party pushed the niqab issue. It was designed to polarize voters in Quebec in a move away from the NDP while consolidating the Conservative base of support. And when looking at the overall polling numbers, the Conservative base remained strong. What they did not count on was a coalescing of support to move from the NDP to the Liberals; an inability to grow beyond their core support; and many Canadians' preference for hope, optimism and unity compared to the more divisive nature of market segmentation that casts some aside.

The "new normal" is bound to infect campaign style from now on, not least by shifting the emphasis from normative logic (informing and engaging voters) to market logic (selling leaders and shopping for votes). New technology allows parties to target untapped pockets of support in a bid to get more votes. Increasingly the win will go to the war room with the best generic "feel good" message and the strongest data set.

Shopping For Votes: A Sequel?

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Susan Delacourt has been covering politics on Parliament Hill since the late 1980s and has written four books about people and events in Canadian politics. Her latest book, *Shopping for Votes* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2013), about how marketing has changed Canadian political life, was a finalist for the Writers' Trust/Hilary Weston prize in Canadian non-fiction. Susan also teaches political journalism and communication at Carleton University in Ottawa, is a writer at iPolitics, and appears regularly on CBC, CTV, and Global TV.

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In the political marketplace described in my 2013 book *Shopping for Votes: How Politicians Choose Us and We Choose Them*, Canada's 42nd federal election traded in two currencies—dollars and change. The resounding majority victory for Justin Trudeau and the Liberals would seem to be evidence that change was more powerful than dollars, and that voters went to the ballot box as more than just wallet-conscious consumers.

Conservative leader Stephen Harper had tried, in the final week of the campaign, to reframe the election as a consumer choice—notably by punctuating his final appearances with the pinging sound of a cash register and wads of cash laid on a table. At the big Toronto rally on the last Saturday before voting day, featuring former mayor Rob Ford and his brother Doug Ford, the main Conservative message revolved around value for dollars. "I'll tell ya, Rob came up with this phrase, but nothing I can remember in a federal election is any more important than respect for taxpayers," Doug Ford told the crowd before Harper spoke. As it turned out, though, Canadians did seem to have issues beyond the old "pocketbook" or "taxpayer" concerns in this election.

A poll by Abacus Data, conducted for *Macleans* magazine, was released on the same weekend as the Ford rally. It showed that though the economy was the top issue for a little more than one-third of the respondents, a full 47% said their vote decision would be based on "values" or a desire for change.

Voters didn't seem to be thinking about themselves as consumers when the election wandered into the perilous territory of the niqab, and whether Muslim women should be allowed to wear face coverings at citizenship ceremonies. Nor were consumer concerns top of mind when a young boy's body turned up on a beach halfway around the world and the campaign's conversation turned to the subject of Canada's policy on Syrian refugees. Most importantly, perhaps, the voting results were widely interpreted as a demand for a change in tone at the top of the Canadian government. "I think our obvious weakness has been in tone, in the way we've often communicated our messages," outgoing Conservative cabinet minister Jason Kenney said on election night.

All this said, the latest election in Canada did build on many of the marketplace tools and tactics highlighted in *Shopping for Votes*. Conservatives relied heavily on advertising, including an eleventh-hour purchase of front-page-wrap ads across the Postmedia and Sun newspaper chains. Trudeau and the Liberals used advertising in sometimes novel ways, turning the Conservatives' "just not ready" ads into an "I'm ready" rebuttal. The Liberal campaign was also highly attentive to imagery. One of the final Liberal campaign ads featured Trudeau on a stage in Brampton, rallying support in a style reminiscent of the Molson's "I am Canadian" ads of the 1990s. Others might have been reminded of former US president Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" ads of the 1980s.

All of the parties put new digital and data management tools to extensive use, especially in get-out-the-vote efforts. The surge in voter turnout at advance polls—a 70% rise over 2011—may well be traced to the parties' increased sophistication in identifying and mobilizing support through those databases well in advance of the official election day. The nearly 70% figure in overall turnout may also be

an indication that Canadian political parties are putting their data tools to good, democratic use.

Everyone looks for value when shopping, even when "shopping for votes." But Canada's 42nd election is evidence that voters assess value in many ways; in dollars and change.

Letting the Press Decide? Party Coverage, Media Tone, and Issue Salience in the 2015 Canadian Federal Election Newsprint

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In many ways, election campaigns are struggles by parties to get their messages across to the electorate through the media. In fact, modern electoral campaigns are largely media-driven affairs with the press serving as a conduit for information about everything from polling information to substantive policy discussions. Especially during elections perceived to be close, the press spends an enormous amount of time and effort focusing on politics. Canadians, for their part, consume this media in large numbers.

This is why we decided to quantify and explore the nature of newsprint coverage of the 2015 election from the time of the writ drop through to the end of the campaign. Data for this analysis comes from an original database of 5,078 newsprint articles concerning the political parties and 6,728 articles about three of the major issues of the 2015 campaign: the niqab, the economy, and the Syrian refugee crisis. Collected between August 4 and October 18, 2015, these data allow for an in-depth and granular analysis of the campaign as seen through the lens of the media.[1]

Figure 1 tracks the percentage of articles per day that first mention a particular party. While simple, the party first mentioned in each article is a powerful proxy for the central focal point of that article. In short, articles about the Liberals will, more often than not, begin by mentioning that party.

As Figure 1 shows, the Conservative Party enjoyed a substantial advantage in news coverage to begin the campaign, and that coverage slowly eroded through September and October. This advantage is typical for incumbent parties who tend to serve as the reference point for campaigns and who also enjoy the prominence associated with being in government.

Mirroring the dynamics seen in daily polling data, the Liberal Party trailed both the Conservatives and New Democratic Party in news coverage until the late days of the campaign when the Liberal take-off began. As the change vote began to coalesce around the Liberals, they garnered about twice the news coverage in the late days of the campaign as they had received weeks earlier.

While the Conservative Party may have received the lion's share of news coverage, the question remains whether this coverage was positive or negative in nature. This question is answered by examining media tone, which is a simple count of the number of positive words in each article subtracted by the number of negative words (based on the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary) and divided by the total number of words.

Using this measure, Figure 2 shows the Conservative Party's advantage in news prominence was largely offset by the negativity of this coverage. In fact, with the exception of the first days of the campaign, Conservatives trailed the Liberals and NDP in average tone in every subsequent day of the campaign.

Largely mirroring the trends seen in media prominence, the Liberals and NDP appear to be fairly indistinguishable until the late stages of the campaign. However, as Liberal Party

1 Articles sourced from *Calgary Herald, Montreal Gazette, Regina Leader-Post, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star,* and *Vancouver Sun*.

coverage became more prominent during their take-off, it also became more positive.

While some may view these trends in media tone as evidence of media bias or undue influence, it is important to remember that the media react quickly to the shifting moods of the campaigns and to opinion leaders throughout the electorate. In this way, the dynamics seen here may simply be because of journalists effectively sniffing out the underlying trends that were unfolding independent of any media influence.

Finally, it is worthwhile to explore the salience of the various issues that sprung up throughout the campaign (Figure 3). Perhaps unsurprising considering Canadians' focus on the economy throughout the campaign, the economy held the largest share of the media's attention with the exception of a period in mid-September when a shocking image of a drowned Syrian toddler elevated coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis. Interestingly, the Conservative Party's use of the niqab as a campaign wedge issue is strikingly clear in the data. The niqab received no substantive coverage until September 10 when it began to steadily rise through to the end of the campaign. Of note, comparing Figures 2 and 3 suggests a corresponding decrease in the tone of Conservative coverage as the niqab debate gained prominence.

For a campaign that will perhaps best be remembered for a strong change vote that vacillated between opposition parties, the present analysis fits neatly with the post-election narratives offered by pundits and political scientists alike regarding a late-campaign Liberal take-off. Whether this is evidence of a media effect during the campaign or simply an attentive press capturing the natural evolution of the campaign is ultimately up to one's own interpretation of the role of the media in Canadian democracy.

Figure 1: Party Daily Newsprint Articles (Percent)

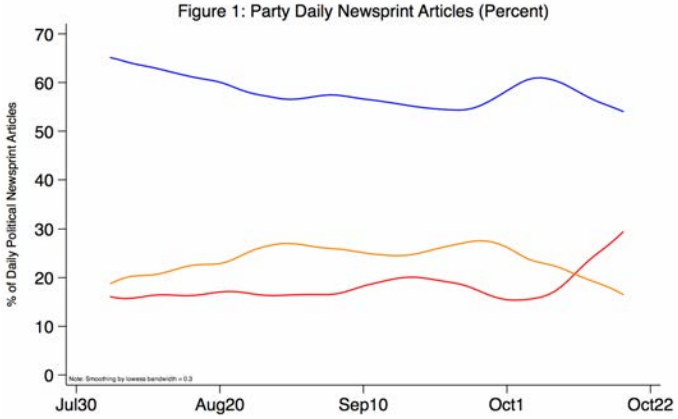


Figure 2: Party Tone of Newsprint Articles

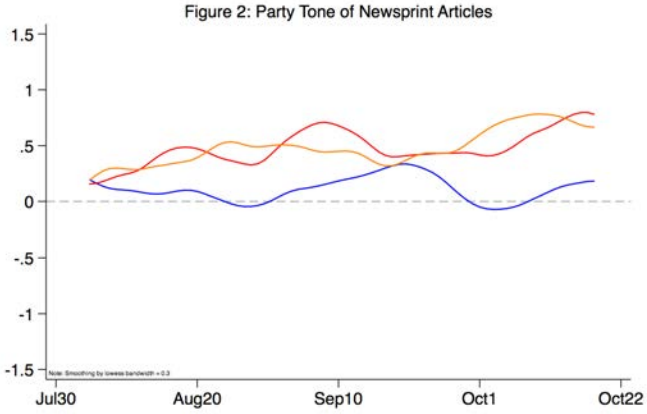
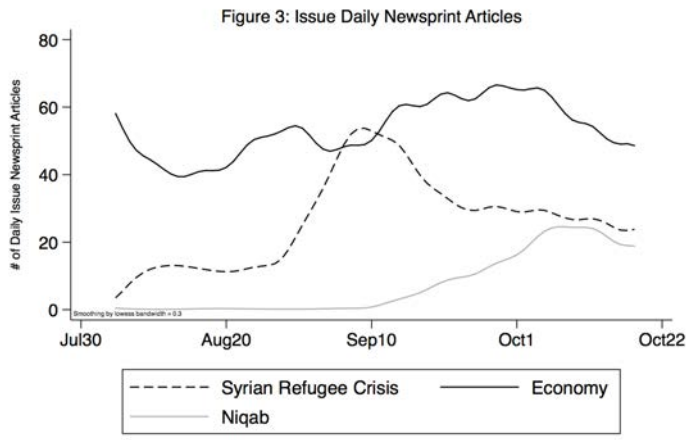


Figure 3: Issue Daily Newsprint Articles



The Political Science Professor and the Media

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Anna Esselment has published on issues of federalism and intergovernmental relations, political marketing, and permanent campaigning in Canada. Her most recent publications include "The Governing Party and the Permanent Campaign" in *Political Communication in Canada* (UBC Press, 2014) and "Designing Campaign Platforms," The Informed Citizens' Guide to Elections: Electioneering Based on the Rule of Law, Special Issue, *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law* (2015).

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The 2015 election was when I truly committed to public commentary. For many years the thought of a journalist calling me for observations on some aspect of Canadian politics struck me with fear. I was worried about sounding incompetent by missing a key fact, or saying something offhand that would end up in print or on TV. I'm not alone among my academic colleagues reluctant to immerse ourselves in public discourse. Where we tend to be long winded, providing context and nuance to our thoughts and arguments, the media require succinct and snappy analysis. Not the greatest strength of most scholars.

Three factors changed my mind about engaging with the media this time around. The first is that 75% of commentary in Canada is from a male perspective. This is according to *Informed Opinions,* a non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging women to offer their analysis and views on subjects within their area of expertise. As a female scholar, I feel an obligation to help shift this disparity. Second, the advent of digital communication technologies and a 24-hour news cycle requires thoughtful insight to balance what is on offer from politicians and political insiders who, in my view, are more than happy to fill the airwaves and blogospheres with what is primarily partisan spin. Persuading the public in opinion formation is a legitimate endeavour, but one that should be countered with objective understanding from academics. The final factor is my sense of responsibility to the wider public. We know that many Canadians have little knowledge or interest in politics. Part of my job, both inside and outside the classroom, is to extend knowledge and spark interest in Canadian politics, even if it can be a struggle to explain a complex issue in an accessible way. Through media commentary we can extend the democratic conversation that is integral to an engaged and informed citizenry.

There are obvious challenges to what I have set out above. The broadcaster's short interview timeframe sets a trap for making obvious and banal observations. I noted several times during the campaign that it was a "tight three way race." I'm not sure a PhD was a prerequisite for that sort of analysis. Another issue is the time required for media interviews. I, for one, will not go into an interview unprepared. I request questions in advance, consider them carefully, and set out the points I want to deliver to Canadians on that subject. Relatedly, some interviews require that you be in a studio. Thus travel and set-up time must be considered. The time requirement has a third aspect: once you have appeared on TV or radio, and the producers happen to like you, you can be inundated with requests to appear again. While the opportunities to contribute to the public debate are frequent, being able to do so without it having a deleterious effect on your time with students or on your own scholarship is a significant consideration. We also shouldn't be naïve enough to think that our commentary will somehow rise above the fray and influence public opinion or policy making. With thousands of voices, ours is only one of many. But unlike our books or journal articles, often read by only a handful of fellow academics, media reach is exponentially wider.

These challenges aside, I have learned a few things about the relationship between the professor and the media. I have found that journalists are not generally combative or adversarial but are instead interested in your insight and expertise to help their audiences understand a political issue or

problem. Print journalists in particular will take time to talk with you, ask you questions, and think about your explanations on the subject about which they are writing, and solid, professional connections can result. Accommodations regarding the time requirement can also be made. Methods of communication are such that giving an interview over FaceTime or Skype, from the comfort of your own home or office, is increasingly popular. At the same time we must remember that choosing *when* to engage in public commentary, and *how*, remains our own. We do not owe anything to the producers of 24-hour networks or radio programs and should never feel pressured to comment on areas outside our expertise. Opinion editorials, for example, are often better venues for scholars to set out an analysis in a way that allows for nuance and context.

My media experiences during the 2015 campaign have shown me that I can simplify, explain, and help Canadians understand issues of politics. I may occasionally miss key facts, and I often wish I could rephrase an answer, but the democratic conversation is what matters. Consequently we should, as scholars, be keen contributors.

The Party Leader's Image and Brand Management: Party Branding and Negative Ads in the 2015 Canadian Federal Election

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Jeff MacLeod's scholarship explores arts-based methods of inquiry within the context of standard political science. Journals in which his work has been published include *The Canadian Journal of Political Science, Mythlore* (Tolkien studies), *Healthcare Papers, Canadian Parliamentary Review,* and *International Journal of the Image*. His most recent publication is "Tolkien's Art and Politics: Is Middle-earth Real?" *The Artifice* (June, 2015). MacLeod is also an active visual artist.

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The 2015 Canadian federal election brought a deluge of visual imagery. The main political parties spent millions of dollars producing and disseminating political advertising, before and during the writ period. The campaigns also carefully attempted to stage-manage the daily video clips captured by the media of their leader's tour, while at the same time coping with the infusion of visual imagery external to their campaigns. Any one of these visual elements has the capability to assist or destroy a party's campaign.

The ability of a visual image to evoke a political narrative is hardly a contested concept. Noted political scientist Murray Edelman showed that visual art does not just describe political content, it creates it. However, as Edelman points out, there is no "immaculate perception:" visual objects (e.g. campaign advertising, the leaders' tour, etc.) derive their power from pre-existing narratives. Moreover, these narratives need refreshed visual imagery in order to have a base of cultural support (see MacLeod and Webb 2011; Edelman 1995).

In the case of the 2015 election, the visual imagery of the leaders' tour from all of the campaigns pictured the party leader surrounded by supporters. One CBC article described them as "potted plants" accented with the party's brand colour (Conservative/blue; Liberal/red; NDP/orange; Green/green). In addition, all of the parties framed the majority of their paid advertising with their party hue and the leader's image. From a marketing perspective, the parties' brands and leaders were fused, at least in visual terms.

This very brief treatment ignores some potent external imagery (published outside the direct control of the official campaigns) in favour of focusing on the core visual narrative presented through the main parties' attack ads. Volumes could be written on the efficacy of negative advertising, and in this campaign the three largest parties (Conservative, Liberal, NDP) all aired ads that assaulted the ethical character or competence of their opponent, although the Liberals relied less on this approach and their attacks were less abrasive. Initially, the most poignant negative ad was the Conservatives' "just not ready" missive launched against Liberal leader Justin Trudeau. It featured a group sitting around a table conducting a mock performance review of Trudeau's file. The actors commented that Trudeau lacked experience to be prime minister but allowed that "he has nice hair"—seemingly a reference to his youthful, handsome appearance. This ad and other allied framing weakened the image of the Liberal leader in the early part of the campaign. However, the Liberals were able to counter this narrative with their own "ready" ads as well as an assist from the NDP who offered their version of the performance review ad which asserted that Stephen Harper too had "nice hair," but it was "time to let him go." NDP leader Thomas Mulcair and Prime Minister Stephen Harper sparred with each other through their parties' negative ads, but it was Trudeau who faced the brunt of the Conservative offensive. But, by the end of the campaign, Trudeau had effectively vanquished the notion that he wasn't ready through his performance in the televised leaders' debates, through effective ads which presented a visual narrative expressing his readiness, and through positive news coverage.

I assert that the failure of the Conservative approach was due to a design

flaw in the initial attack. Visually, an attack ad tends to show the target leader with their brand colour darkened or removed and an unflattering likeness, often rendered in murky grey-tones; yet, the Conservative ad features a full-colour, flattering picture of Trudeau. This picture contradicts the text of the commercial. Indeed, if you turn the sound off this ad can almost be read as a pro-Trudeau ad.

In sum, the visual narrative of this campaign mirrored the textual one: it was largely a referendum on Harper. In other aspects it was a referendum on Trudeau's image and his party's brand, as well as on Mulcair's image. In part, Trudeau's physical appearance became shorthand for whether he was competent enough for the job, and in the early days of the campaign it was becoming a liability. In the end, the Liberal Party was able to produce potent visual imagery in their paid advertising and during the leader's tour. Their campaign effectively neutered the opposition attacks and enabled Trudeau to forge a narrative that convinced enough Canadians that he was capable of leading a new government.

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Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail: Political Advertising in the 2015 Election

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Jonathan Rose teaches political communication and Canadian politics at Queen's. He has written on the role of advertising both in elections by political parties and between elections by government. Since 2004, Jonathan has been a member of the Ontario Auditor General's Advertising Review panel that reviews Ontario government advertising. His recent publications include "Television Advertising and its Impact on Campaigning and Elections" (co-written with Tim Abray), *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law* (Spring 2015) and *When Citizens' Decide: Lessons From Citizens' Assemblies*, co-written with André Blais, R. Kenneth Carty, Patrick Fournier and Henk van der Kolk (Oxford University Press, 2011).

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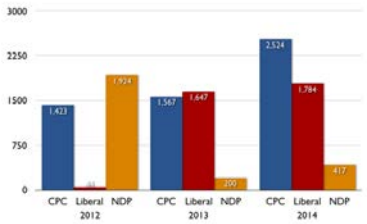
The 2015 Canadian election will be remembered for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the role played by advertising. While we won't know for some time how much the parties spent on the campaign or advertising, the die was cast well before the election was called. Party election advertising is a continuation of non-election advertising and we can see that the three national political parties spent increasing amounts over the last three years (see Chart 1).

Chart 1:
Party advertising in non-election years (in thousands of dollars)

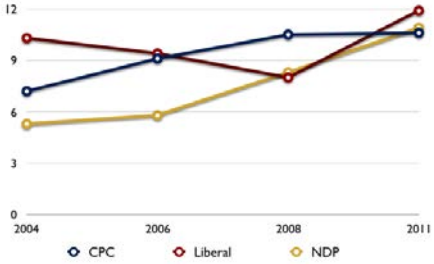


Source: Elections Canada: Statements of Assets & Liabilities and Statements of Revenue and Expenses

Political parties begin advertising well before the election is called. This is readily apparent in each of the last three years. (The seemingly anomalous Liberal and NDP amounts in 2012 can be explained by the fact that the Liberals had no money after the 2011 election and that the NDP chose Thomas Mulcair as leader in 2012 and were eager to have him not framed in the same way as the Conservatives framed Stéphane Dion.) This pre-election period is significant as it allows parties to begin priming voters on themes that they deem important. For the Conservatives, the "just not ready" ads began; for the Liberals, it was about change and hope; and for the NDP it was around judgment and experience. Pre-writ tests showed that while the Conservatives spent more on advertising in this period, it was the NDP that was more effective.

While parties spend money on advertising leading up to an election, over the four contests prior to 2015, they increased their advertising buys during the official campaign period. Chart 2 shows that there has been an upward trend devoting resources to advertising. The growth was greatest for the NDP and the Conservatives.

Chart 2:
Election Ad Spending in dollars (millions)



It is not just the amount spent that is noticeable, but the growing importance of advertising in the parties' overall expenditures. In the last three elections, all parties but the NDP devoted at least 50% of their campaign budget to advertising. If the three parties spent their allowable limit of $50 million in the 2015 election, and they follow the previous pattern of devoting at least 50% to advertising, then we can assume that they spent more than $25 million in this election on advertising—a considerable jump from the previous campaigns.

It's clear that political parties believe in advertising. They use it before an election to prime and during an election to reinforce their message. Like all campaigns, this one was marked by negative advertising as well as upbeat, positive ads. Many scholars believe that negative advertising works because it motivates voters and is easily recalled. For these scholars,

while advertising may not be good for democracy, it is a strong motivator for voting (Geer 2006). Ads are persuasive if they resonate; they resonate if they make strong emotional appeals, which are usually negative. Anger and fear are stronger motivators than positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, pride, and compassion. The 2015 campaign was notable because most of the negative ads were by the Conservatives and played on instilling fear that an untested new leader, Justin Trudeau, was not worth the risk. The most honest thing one can say about ads of all sorts is that some work, some of the time, on some people, and that advertising effect is short term if at all. The Conservative ads this election were marked by messages that resonated with voters as "anxious" or "angry" over "hopeful" according to Innovative Research. The other parties mostly ran positive ads that played on "hopeful" over the negative emotions of "anxious" or "angry."

The advertising legacy of this campaign will be not only the amount of money spent by parties but also some violations of the norms around campaign advertising. One of the cardinal rules of advertising is not to reply to negative attacks. So when the Conservatives ran its "just not ready" ad, the traditional view is that the Liberals should have ignored it. The Liberals did not and its "ready" ad, which responded directly to the Conservative's negative ad, was one of the most successful and persuasive ads in the election according to Innovative Research. Another novelty of this campaign was the reliance on radio by all three parties in the last week of the campaign. This was done to mobilize their supporters to vote. The Conservatives did something no party has ever done and had a series of new radio ads each day at the end of the campaign. Each one ended with "I'm Stephen Harper. Let's talk tomorrow." This unprecedented campaign speaks to the importance the Conservatives put on mobilizing their vote as well as the resources that they had devoted for the last week of the campaign.

In conclusion, though Canada's political parties likely spent more on advertising during this election than any other one in Canadian history, the ad campaign began well before the election got underway. The election ads tell us much about the triumph of positive over negative ads, the wisdom of responding to those attacks, and perhaps, a revival of radio as a persuasive medium.

Trudeau as Celebrity Politician: Winning by More than a Hair

Patricia Cormack

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St. Francis Xavier University

Patricia Cormack has recently published (with James. F. Cosgrave) *Desiring Canada: CBC Contests, Hockey Violence, and other Stately Pleasures* (University of Toronto Press, 2013). The book discusses how interests of state in Canada are supported by way of the cultivation of various pleasures on the part of citizens. It asks: How do everyday pleasures like Tim Hortons coffee, state-controlled gambling, CBC hockey, contests, and humour all work to cultivate a desire on the part of Canadians for the state mediation of their lives?

sites.stfx.ca/sociology/people

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Mireille Lalancette is a researcher in the Groupe de recherche en communication politique (GRCP). She recently published (with Marie-Josée Drolet and Marie-Ève Caty) *ABC de l'argumentation pour les professionnels de la santé ou toute autre personne qui veut convaincre* (Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2015). Her work has appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Communication* as well as in several edited books, among them UBC Press's *Political Communication in Canada: Meet the Press and Tweet the Rest* (2015).

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Acting simultaneously as Prime Minister of Canada and leader of the Conservative Party, Stephen Harper was able to get the jump on framing election themes for voters. This election, he said, would focus on serious issues—international threats of economic collapse and terror—and not be a "popularity contest." Here Harper was implying that some federal party leaders would be offering more celebrity than substance.

Harper's assertion set the tone for what we call the Tory "positive attack" ads that played on Justin Trudeau's celebrity status. These ads were different from negative ads against other candidates in that they made use of personal themes generated by the Liberal Party's own campaign. They played cleverly with the double-edged nature of celebrity. A celebrity is simultaneously special (above everyday life) and ordinary (someone that supporters identify with at an intimate level). Celebritization is a form of political communication where politicians' lives are used to engage with citizens and voters in a more personal than ideological mode. It both informs political communication strategies and encourages politicians to use their personal lives to connect with voters.

Justin Trudeau is the oft-photographed first child of the stylish Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau and his young and beautiful wife, Margaret ("Maggie"). Margaret describes herself as the first Canadian prime minister's wife to be "paparazzied," noting the privacy accorded to wives who preceded her. Pierre Trudeau swept to power with a majority Liberal government in 1968 as a then dashing bachelor—what the press dubbed Trudeaumania. Trudeau Sr. was also famous for his pioneering use of modern marketing technologies and experts. His-rebellious and young persona fit nicely with his wide progressive legislative reforms. By association, Trudeau Jr. inherits a celebrity status that potentially provides the foundation for a political family dynasty, like the Kennedys in the US.

As leader of the Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau and his advisers carefully crafted his image by using his fame, family, and personal history to fit the expectations of mass-mediated and entertainment driven politics. His biography, *Common Ground*, like Obama's *Tales From My Father*, candidly depicts his life, with descriptions of his childhood at 24 Sussex Drive, his romantic relationship with his wife, and how he became a Liberal candidate. The release of this book was also the occasion for many interviews in the popular media, like *Chatelaine* magazine, allowing Trudeau to demonstrate both his mastery of popular culture codes and his purported common ground with ordinary people. During the electoral campaign, multiple images showed Trudeau re-enacting his father's memorable photo ops.

This all provided the backdrop for the Tory ads and discourses that explicitly questioned the young Liberal leader's competence. One repeated ad depicted a number of concerned looking citizens (all seemingly old enough to remember Trudeau Jr. as a child, and a major voting demographic) commenting that "Justin" is "just not ready" to become Prime Minister. The *coup de grace* comes when one protagonist concludes that Trudeau offers nothing more than "nice hair."

This ad questions Trudeau's legitimacy using a style over substance frame, reviving the never-ending debate about image in politics. In fact, two thousand years ago Plato warned

Athenians about being seduced by the crafty sophists who used any means that would win them support. And while suspicious of its misuse, both Plato and Aristotle argued that politics is rooted in rhetoric, or the art of public speech, oriented toward reason and democracy. Hence, the Tories used a kind of anti-rhetoric rhetoric to appeal to voters who do not consider themselves as Trudeau emotional fans and are able to see through political-communication tactics.

There is little evidence that negative attack ads gain support for the attacking party, but mid-campaign polls indicated that the "just not ready" campaign—with its somewhat gentler theme of prudent Canadians waiting for Trudeau to gain experience—did have some effect in eroding support for the Liberals. Tory strategists seem to have hit just the right note. And yet, when Tory and NDP leaders directly criticized Trudeau's father during a televised debate, Trudeau was able to point out that it was the anniversary of his father's death, making the others look cruel. Trudeau took this opportunity to invoke the larger than life legacy of his father, listing the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, bilingualism, and multi-culturalism among his achievements. Ultimately, Trudeau's personality and positive message prevailed by generating themes of opportunity and renewal.

As we have seen in 2015, the use of digital technologies during election campaigns can facilitate the celebritization of politics. From now on, Canadians will have to be attentive to the use and misuse of celebrity in campaigns and note that an *accusation* of celebritization is just another rhetorical tactic in the ongoing play between opposing political parties.

The Blog Is Dead, Long Live the (Micro)Blog! Unpacking Dynamics in Political Blogging during #elxn42

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During the 2006 federal election, blogs emerged as influential components of the political media environment in Canada. While political parties and candidates turned to these social media outlets for voter outreach and mobilization, traditional media and journalists used them for news-gathering, reporting, as well as commentary, and members of the public used them for self-expression and political engagement.

Close to a decade later, the situation is radically different. The 2015 federal election has been marked by a generalized slowdown of long-form political blogging, which has manifested itself through the shortening of blog posts, the reduction of blogging frequency (a phenomenon known as "slow blogging"), and high levels of inactivity on many political blogs. Conversely, microblogging platforms, such as Twitter, have gained traction among the public and become popular tools for political communication and participation. There are three interconnected factors that are contributing to reshaping political blogging in Canada: brevity, instantaneity, and connectivity.

Unlike blogs, which can accommodate longer and more elaborate publications, the format of microblogs has caused their users to express themselves in a brief and condensed fashion. This was prevalent during the 2015 Canadian federal campaign. Formal and informal political players used microblogging channels to circulate large volumes of short-form political information and opinion as well as to engage in various forms of political action (e.g., fundraising, promoting mobilization events). While better suited for sharing "one-liners" and simplified ideas than for engaging in nuanced deliberation due in part to the short nature of posts, these media platforms have nonetheless enabled users to be active politically in ways requiring less time and effort. This trend is intensifying as Internet-enabled mobile devices (e.g. tablets, smartphones) become an integral part of the daily life of a large and growing number of Canadians. These technologies, which are well adapted for short-form politics, could expand uses of Twitter and comparable social media tools for political communication, mobilization, and engagement, in and outside elections.

Over the last seven years, several studies have shown that political blogs have facilitated the quick diffusion of digital material that, in some cases, becomes viral. Microblogs further accelerated this dynamic in ways particularly noticeable during the 2015 elections. On one hand, they provided an outlet for Internet users to quickly broadcast digital content to a mass audience as well as to engage in real-time interactions with other users, especially during politically sensitive moments such as leaders' debates and on election night. Specifically, a number of Canadians used Twitter to provide instant commentary during the French- and English-language televised debates, a practice known as live-tweeting. Even Green Party leader Elizabeth May, who was not invited to the Munk debate, posted a string of tweets in which she shared her views on different policy issues, such as security, foreign policy, and the environment, as the debate unfolded on stage. On the other hand, microblogs enable Canadians to access to a wealth of election-related information

and opinion through monitoring live microblogging feeds based on different criteria, including keywords, hashtags, or accounts of specific users.

Finally, while political blogs are part of "discrete [hyperlinked and constantly-evolving] ecosystems, the broadest of which is the 'political blogosphere,'" the structural and functional properties of microblogging sites have further boosted levels of content and social connectivity in digital politics. First, hashtags were instrumental in organizing flows of information and social interactions during the 2015 election. For example, Canadians used hashtags referring to a wide range of election-related matters, including policy issues (e.g., #C51, #economy), geographical locations (e.g., #yyc, #QC), events (e.g., #PeeGate, #DuffyTrial), or emotions often expressed in a humorous or sarcastic way (e.g., #GlibandMale, #sohappy), to tailor their information intake based on frequently narrow interests or objectives. Second, and to a lesser degree, microblogs' internal social interaction functionalities, such as @ mentions and retweets, and the direct messaging tool in the case of Twitter, provided individuals and organizations with the opportunity to interact with other users in the context of the campaign, a dynamic that has the potential to yield political engagement dividends.

The practice of political blogging has evolved significantly since first making its mark on the Canadian electoral landscape in 2006. This trend is likely to continue in the future. More immediately, the rise of image and short video-based social media outlets, such as Instagram and SnapChat, as well as the popularization of more visual forms of digital expression (e.g., memes, emojis) will further transform the ways in which formal and informal political players take part in different facets of the electoral process.

Did Election 2015 Prove Kim Campbell Wrong?

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Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell is commonly believed to have said during the 1993 federal election what many politicos, pundits, and students of modern politics may privately believe—that campaigns are rarely, if ever, opportunities to have a serious debate over the policy questions facing new legislators and the core executive.

It is true that campaign promises are not subject to the same scrutiny as policy options for a government in power. There is little, if any, public attention to which policy is more efficient, which is more equitable, and what, if any, legal or constitutional constraints may apply. In lieu of dispassionate, objective policy analysis, it seems that voters must learn and make choices instead by looking at one parties' promises in relation to comparable options from competing parties.

The marathon length of the 2015 federal election might have, if only to fill the airtime, created more chances to discuss and debate substantive policy issues. There were far more debates organized amongst the leaders, including two single-themed debates on the economy and foreign policy, though these often lacked the structure to permit an exchange of substantive points.

The parties, as is now ritual in campaigns, issued their own election platform documents, replete with lists of policies they would enact (or cancel, or prevent) if elected, along with favourable estimates of the costs involved. Many of those commitments were announced well in advance of the start of the campaign, offering opportunity for supporters and critics alike to digest and dissect them. But parties will, as is their prerogative, use their own systems for categorizing and costing their platforms, often frustrating efforts by some observers to do much comparative analysis. For voters seeking even ad hoc summaries of platform promises, third-party web-based services hosted by Pollenize and VoteCompass by Vox Pop Labs, among others in the mainstream media, were more plentiful this time than in previous federal elections.

Finally, the longer campaign increased the demands on leaders' tours to offer not just 37 days of tightly scripted announcements and messaging, but 78 days' worth. This should, mathematically at least, increase the chances of two or more parties speaking on comparable policy commitments in a given campaign day and being forced, by circumstance, to offer some response or contrast to one another.

But this was also the campaign of over two dozen resignations of candidates from all parties for various transgressions. Most were captured on social media and some were bizarre. This was also the campaign that featured a sitting Prime Minister engaging repeatedly in a frolicsome interactive stump speech, which may have made him seem more similar to a game show host than a candidate for national office.

It was the campaign that debated the place of the niqab in Canadian citizenship ceremonies and in the latter weeks of the campaign, in federal institutions like the federal public service. It was also the campaign in which the scripted leaders' tours were all interrupted, at least briefly, by the heartbreaking image of the tiny remains of Alan Kurdi, lying face-down on a Turkish beach, lapped by the waves of an Aegean sea that was supposed to take him closer to a country like Canada. Were these last two

examples mere "distractions" from serious issues?

There is a lens through which the social media gaffes, the niqab, and even a wrenching image of a Syrian youngster would appear to have been distractions from more substantive "issues" of the campaign. By this frame of reference, observable communications or issues management is used to explain party behaviour as purely self-interested during a permanent campaign. These shocks (whether exogenous or created by a campaign itself) to the campaign message are seen as distractions from real substantive policy debates. Furthermore, their very occurrence is used to justify the proposition advanced at the start of this entry—that, in campaigns, platforms matter little to outcomes and are never properly debated. But there is a selective and possibly circular quality to that logic.

The debate over the limits to a woman's right to religious expression and to reasonable accommodation is a question of the limits of the state over individual rights. Likewise the competing ideas on the resettlement of Syrian refugees revealed different preferences in prioritizing security, humanitarian goals, and different conceptions of the public interest in Canada. Even more, the Syrian refugee debate was one example where public engagement, perhaps accelerated by the election campaign, appears to have had a measurable impact on the policy direction of the caretaker government. These were, in truth, debates of substantive policy questions, not mere distractions.

These are questions of the values that underlie and motivate choices among policy options and choices about which policy problems to prioritize. All parties should take heed.

Missing in Action: Disability Policy and Persons with Disabilities

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Mario Levesque researches disability policy in Canada including political participation, labour market programming, and transit issues for persons with disabilities. He has published widely on the subject including, with Peter Graefe, "'Not Good Enough': Canada's Stalled Disability Policy," in *How Ottawa Spends, 2013-14*, Bruce Doern and Chris Stoney, eds. (2013) and "Assessing the Ability of Disability Organizations: An Interprovincial Comparative Perspective," *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research* 3, no. 2 (2012). His most recent article "Searching for Persons with Disabilities in Canadian Provincial Office," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, is forthcoming.

www.mta.ca/Community/Bios/Mario_Levesque/Mario_Levesque/

Why such a lack of media coverage and interest in disability candidates and issues in the 2015 election? Surely disability is a significant issue. Disability's absence was interesting given attention to questions of gender parity among candidates both pre-election and post-election. A similar situation unfolded in regards to visible minority candidates, again both pre-campaign and post-campaign. But where was disability?

To be sure, there were few candidates with disabilities: just 14 out of a possible 1,430 candidates. That is about 1% of the total number of candidates, a gross underrepresentation, given that up to 14% of the Canadian population identifies as having a disability. Certainly, if we are concerned about the state of our democracy and that ensuring different voices are heard, the lack of candidates with disabilities is of concern and is itself worthy of media coverage. Yet, why the silence on the lack of candidates?

It was not for a lack of quality candidates or competitive races. For example, Steven Fletcher, the long-time Conservative MP (since 2004) and former cabinet minister, was defeated in a tight race in Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia-Headingley. While progressive as an MP on disability issues when in office, such issues never formed a big part of his re-election bid which instead broadly focused on the economy. This was significant given the mid-campaign release of his new book, *Master of My Fate*, detailing his efforts to legalize physician assisted suicide in Canada, which was well covered by the media.

Two other campaigns that received notable media attention were for Liberal candidates Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre) and Carla Qualtrough (Delta). For Hehr, the two-term Alberta Liberal MLA, the focus was on trying to become the first Calgary Liberal MP elected in over four decades. His campaign centred on normative issues such as job creation. The plan worked as Hehr won by less than 1,000 votes. For Qualtrough, a high profile human rights lawyer and disability activist, her successful campaign also followed a similar pattern of focusing narrowly on economic issues.

What can be seen is that candidates with disabilities themselves minimize disability issues so as not to be defined by them, a point that Fletcher readily admits. Fair enough. But it also points to persistent issues of stigma and discrimination in society against persons with disabilities.

From a democratic perspective, the limited media coverage on the few candidates with disabilities is troubling given the relative indifference in media attention to disability issues. Where was the media coverage on the lack of Conservative action on their proposed 2006 National Disability Act? The same can be said to the limited mediatization of the Liberal, NDP and Green party commitments to enact a Canadians with Disabilities Act. The NDP went the furthest in publishing a four page open letter from their leader, Tom Mulcair, on their positions and support for Canadians living with disabilities. Yet again, the silence from the media was deafening on this major policy stand. Only one media article by Andre Picard exists on the subject, a fact which led CBC radio's Michael Enright to conclude that disabled Canadians were invisible in the 2015 election.

To be fair, media coverage of disability did exist but it was limited to the (in)accessibility of polling stations. On this, the media had plenty to say revealing partially or fully inaccessible

polling stations, as well as the voting accommodations provided for those in need. The quantity and depth of this coverage was interesting given that the media sought out disability organizations such as the Council of Canadians with Disabilities for comments. Yet the campaigns for a Canadians with Disabilities Act by these same organizations were ignored by the media, thus revealing a media bias for a charity or medical model of disability.

Simply put, the media lacks an understanding of disability issues and appear scared to venture out to report on them or to provide informed comments. This suggests that if progress on disability issues is to be made, disability organizations need to focus efforts on educating the media and policy makers alike. Perhaps then the disability voice will be able to contribute to building a healthy democracy.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Salience of International Issues

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The stirring photograph of three-year-old Alan Kurdi face-down on a beach made the Syrian refugee crisis an election issue almost as soon as it emerged on September 2. Why did a single image from halfway across the world have such a profound effect on an election campaign? The fallout from this unsettling visual provides insights about why certain images inspire political action and when international issues are likely to become salient.

The Kurdi photo made the refugee crisis salient primarily because it individualized or humanized the crisis. International issues are usually framed in terms of groups—states, organizations, alliances, rebels, terrorists, migrants, and refugees. Collective language and collective images obscure human stories and dull our empathy. News stories about the 71 refugees who suffocated in a truck in Austria, the 200 who drowned off the coast of Libya, and the 2,636 or more who died from January to August failed to make the crisis salient because the victims got lost in the crowd. Particular people, not groups or numbers, trigger empathy.

By focusing on a single victim, the photo of a dead, innocent toddler highlighted the vulnerability of the refugees and downplayed the threat that they pose. Crowds of nameless, faceless migrants may provoke suspicions of terrorism and opportunism, but it is unthinkable not to grieve for a three-year-old boy. Three-year-olds cannot be dismissed as jihadists or economic migrants. Suspicion and indifference about the refugees gave way to the thought that Alan Kurdi could have been anyone's child, which was quickly followed by the thought that Canada ought to have helped somehow. We cannot be suspicious or indifferent about a child who washed up dead on a beach.

Although the intrinsic features of the Kurdi photo explain why it changed perceptions of the refugees worldwide, they only partly explain why the crisis became an election issue in Canada. Research from other countries indicates that international issues are most likely to become salient when they have domestic connections and when they divide political elites. The Syrian refugee crisis probably would not have become an election issue in Canada if not for the Kurdi family's Canadian connection and the disagreement among the three major parties about Canada's policies toward Syria.

The Kurdi family's Canadian connection increased initial media coverage of the photo and reinforced the view that Canada could have done something to help. Alan Kurdi's aunt, Tima Kurdi, lives in British Columbia, and early statements from NDP candidate Fin Donnelly indicated that Citizenship and Immigration Canada had rejected her application to sponsor her nephew's family into Canada. Although it was later revealed that she had instead submitted an application for the family of Alan's uncle, the misinformation had already spread, and Citizenship and Immigration Minister Chris Alexander had already been drawn away from his campaign and into a media frenzy. To add to the confusion, Kurdi's father later blamed Canadian authorities for the deaths of his wife and two sons. The Canadian backstory of the photo, though very muddled, created a campaign issue out of what otherwise would have been a tragedy in a faraway land.

The refugee crisis kept the attention of the media because it provoked a seemingly endless series of disagreements

among Canada's three major parties. The Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP sparred about how many refugees to resettle, how quickly to resettle them, how to fund the resettlement, how to screen refugees, and whether the military campaign against ISIS is a necessary part of the humanitarian effort. In early October, just when the salience of the refugee crisis started to dwindle, *The Globe and Mail* reported that the Prime Minister's Office interfered with the processing of UN-referred Syrian refugee claims in the months before the photo of Alan Kurdi surfaced. The refugee crisis would not have become a prominent election issue had the three parties agreed about how Canada should respond, and it would not have remained salient for the remainder of the campaign if it had not led to many smaller debates and controversies. A tragedy without controversy cannot remain a leading news story and become an election issue.

International issues seldom become election issues in Canada because they are, by definition, collective and distant: they are about groups beyond our borders. The images of the lifeless body of a Syrian boy made the refugee crisis an election issue because it humanized the crisis, had a Canadian connection, and divided Canada's political elites. The fallout suggests that international issues are most likely to become salient when their international characteristics are stripped away—when they are framed in terms of innocent individuals and are brought close to home.

We've Got Some Catching Up to Do: The Public Service and the 2015 Federal Election

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The past ten years were a fascinating time to be a public servant—unless you were in Ottawa.

Since the mid-2000s, governments around the world have experimented with agile service design, new forms of data-driven decision-making, unique collaborations with tech firms, and open policy development. But outside a few pockets of innovation, our federal bureaucrats have been mere bystanders to these developments. Held back by a dearth of leadership, administrative barriers, and haphazard cuts, we face a federal bureaucracy whose policy capacity is almost a decade out of date. As one talented, cutting-edge—but ultimately frustrated—public servant told me, working for the federal government "is like stepping into a time warp."

In an election centred on "change," and, in particular, an election in which the two dominant parties promising that change have a healthy respect for the institution of the public service, we might have hoped to hear more about how our electoral contenders would invest in the public service in the years ahead. But looking back over the election, we didn't hear much.

Yes, the parties discussed their approach to the public service in their official platforms, but I doubt that many Canadians perused the depths of the party websites to find these platforms. In the debates and nationally broadcast interviews we received only passing references to the public service, if any at all.

Public servants' open challenges to the government—and subsequent controversial punishments—entered the national conversation, as did a brief discussion of whether or not public servants should be allowed to wear niqabs. The former issue could have provided occasion to discuss important public service issues, the latter not so much. Regardless, neither issue flourished into a story with much staying power on the electoral agenda.

Where we did see the public service come to the fore was in hotly contested Ottawa ridings. Here we received promises on the long-form census, muzzled scientists, collective bargaining, and public service cuts. Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau offered competing open letters to the public service, and the NDP announced its own take at a gathering of Ottawa candidates. The unions got in on the debate. But these discussions were decidedly Ottawa-centric, focused on winning federal public servants' votes, not inviting the broader citizenry to consider the public service as a governing institution of national import. Unless you were debating between a vote for Conservative incumbent Royal Galipeau or Liberal challenger Andrew Leslie, the parties' stances on the public service probably didn't cross your radar during the election.

Of course, this is where you ask: Wait a second, *is the public service an issue of national import*? Maybe the public service was absent from the election because Canadians outside Ottawa are little concerned with the public service and how it is run. As one journalist put it when describing an Ottawa crowd's giddy reaction to Trudeau's support for the long-form census and government scientists: "there's no nerd like an Ottawa nerd."

And this is precisely the problem. In this election, and in recent years, the public service has primarily been an Ottawa issue. Sure, when asked directly whether they worry about the quality of public services, Canadians say they care. But in general, outside

academia and the public service itself, we lack a fulsome national conversation on, and appreciation for, the role that the public service plays in our democracy.

This role should not be discounted. As users of public services, most Canadians interact far more with the public service than they ever will with elected officials.

Through consultations and stakeholder outreach, federal bureaucrats act as gatekeepers to the policy process, deciding who gets the ear of decision-makers. And in the advice they give ministers, public servants can serve as a valuable source of non-partisan expertise to enrich the decision-making processes affecting citizens.

How the federal public service responds to Access to Information requests, media enquiries, and researchers directly impacts our collective ability to hold the government to account, and to understand the many aspects of Canadian society in which the federal government is implicated. Oh, and remember all those election promises? Well it is the public service that must make them happen in practice.

The takeaway from the 2015 Canadian federal election is that even though the public service is an institution of national import, the nation (and the parties seeking its votes) does not seem terribly interested in discussing it. With a new government in power, academics, media, the public service, and citizens now need to engage in honest discussion about how our public service works, where it does not work so well, and why this matters. These conversations will kick start much-needed updates to a federal bureaucracy that some believe is stuck in a time warp. In short, when it comes to the public service, this election suggests that we've all got some catching up to do.

Constitutional Issues in the 2015 Federal Election

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www.kings.uwo.ca/academics/political-science/people/dr-andrea-lawlor/

Constitutional questions have not dominated recent Canadian federal elections, but they are never far from the surface. In 2015, four issues of constitutional importance stood out: minority government conventions, Quebec secession rules, senate reform, and the "niqab issue."

The parties were, early on, in a tight three-way race. Pundits wasted no time in generating post-election government-formation scenarios. Here, constitutional conventions loom large. Canadians vote to elect local MPs; government formation follows. After an election, if no party has a majority of seats, the incumbent prime minister, whatever his or her party's seat count, may remain in office, meet Parliament, and try to maintain the confidence of the House.

But parties and the media speak as though voters directly elect or defeat governments, which breeds confusion. Mr. Harper said in the campaign that the party with a plurality gets to form a government. The other leaders, with exception of Elizabeth May, found it hard to differ with him, even though there are precedents to the contrary.

Changes in government can, however, occur without an election—especially if a government is defeated in its early days. Consider the events in the aftermath of Ontario's 1985 election. But emerging notions of "democracy" render this problematic. Mr. Harper argued that *people* choose governments, implying that changes in formation require elections. Many would agree, suggesting that the conventions of responsible government may, for better or worse, be changing.

Every party seeking to do well in Quebec must make its peace with Quebec nationalism. For the NDP this meant revisiting the terms on which Quebec may secede from the country. The 2000 federal Clarity Act, putting in legislative form the principles of the Supreme Court's 1998 opinion on the matter, declares that voters must vote with a clear majority on a clear question. The adjective for most people means a super-majority; otherwise, why have the adjective at all? But the NDP, insisting on a clear question, holds that a bare majority would suffice to trigger negotiations.

Justin Trudeau takes "clear majority" to mean something more than 50%+1. When asked by Thomas Mulcair what number he would accept to start negotiation, Trudeau responded, "9," a clever piece of political evasion. Nine is the number of seats on the Supreme Court, and the number of Justices who penned the 1998 Secession opinion. In one stroke he wriggled from Mulcair's hold, showed a rhetorical deftness, and affirmed the authority of the Supreme Court, a point not lost on critics of the Conservatives' chronic court-bashing.

Whatever its value as a chamber of legislative review, the Senate's reputation remains that of a haven for party patrons, rather than a centre for accountability. Recent RCMP investigations into senators' expenses do little to undo this.

In response, all political parties have articulated plans for senate reform—or for no senate at all. Yet, practically all proposed reforms to the senate must navigate Canada's complex constitutional amending formulae. Mulcair would abolish the Senate, which requires unanimous agreement of the provinces and Parliament (a titanic challenge). Outgoing Prime Minister Harper tried to institute provincial consultative elections for senators and to limit senator terms to nine years. The 2014 Supreme Court reference

opinion requires the consent of the provinces for this. Harper's reforms are a dead letter. Trudeau released all sitting Liberal senators from the party caucus (even if some still chose to self-identify as Liberal), the only successful "reform" of the bunch. While the act may be small, the impact of his proposal to strike a non-partisan advisory committee on appointments may go further than formal constitutional reforms.

Perhaps the most controversial event of the campaign is one that barely mentioned the constitution at all. It is safe to say that choice of attire during citizenship ceremonies was not on the public's issue radar when the writ was dropped in August. However, the Conservative party's tying of wearing a niqab during the citizenship oath-swearing to an infraction of Canadian values nearly dominated the final weeks of the campaign. This debate swirled around in the language of Charter values, including fundamental freedoms (section 2) and equality (section 15). Despite a loss at the Federal Court of Appeal on their 2011 niqab ban, where the courts explicitly refrained from evoking Charter language, the Conservatives sought to push ahead with a Supreme Court challenge and to reintroduce the legislation within the first 100 days of governing. With a Liberal majority government taking power, the issue may now be closed.

Many pundits have argued that Canadians lack an appetite for another round of mega-constitutional politics. Nonetheless, constitutional politics remain embedded into some of the core contemporary debates in Canadian politics, and will continue to unfold now that the campaign is done.

Election 2015 and Canada's Public Services

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www.ryerson.ca/politics/about-us/personnel/faculty/evans-bryan.html

In 2014, former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page stated: "The public service of Canada is struggling ... Trust has been diminished." The existential crisis within the federal public service that Page notes was precipitated by Prime Minister Harper's efforts to reconstruct the federal administrative state. Consequently, the 2015 election was marked by a subtext respecting the nature and substance of the relationship between the professional public service and the political executive.

The Harper government has been defined by policy decisions affecting public services and public servants—the ending of the long-form census; the "muzzling" of government scientists; budget cuts generally, but specifically to Canada Post, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and Via Rail; privatizations; closing scientific research centres; contracting out public-service work; termination of senior public executives; and de-regulation. All are coherently linked to a political project not to simply shrink government but to redefine its role.[1]

Labour relations have become particularly confrontational as a combination of budget cuts and strategies to create a more politically responsive and flexible public service has met with opposition from public service unions. The 2013 Budget Bill empowered the government as employer to unilaterally designate certain parts of the public service as essential services, thus eliminating the right to strike from a majority of the public service. In addition, the growth in the contracting out of public-sector work has been an important part of de-professionalization. By 2014, more than $10 billion a year was spent by the federal government on professional services purchased from external contractors at the same time as it cut nearly 20,000 jobs. The better-known cuts to scientific functions as well as the limitations on the ability of government scientists to communicate their research findings are yet another part of the story of de-professionalization.

Public service unions have responded with uncharacteristic public opposition to the Conservative government. The Public Service Alliance of Canada rolled out a $2.7 million ad campaign called "Vote to Stop the Cuts" in the summer of 2015 and expanded this during the election campaign. The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, which represents government scientists, decided to move to active opposition in 2014 when scientists proposed that the union abandon its tradition of neutrality and campaign openly against the Harper government. PIPSC targeted "priority" electoral ridings where a majority of public servants live in an effort to defeat Conservative MPs.

Consequently, during the 2015 campaign, both of the main opposition parties made commitments to repair the broken relationship with the public service. The Liberals promised to bargain in good faith and to restore many of the cuts, to end the muzzling of scientists, and to repeal anti-public service legislation. And both opposition parties' platforms contained commitments to open the policy process and ensure that evidence and science were at the foundation of policy-making. The Liberals further pledged to establish new performance standard for Veterans Affairs services, immigration processing, and appeals at the social security tribunal. The NDP committed

1 Donald Gutstein. *Harperism: How Stephen Harper and His Think Tank Colleagues Have Transformed Canada.* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co.), 188.

to restoring respect and the notion of a professional public service, reducing the outsourcing of public service work, and planning to create a Public Appointments Commissioner to ensure government appointments are not politicized.

Political parties are elected to create, reform, or withdraw public goods and services. The public servants who design and deliver these services are the connective tissue between Parliament and the point of public consumption.

What the 2015 election tells us is that the integrity and capacity of the public service to do their work is understood, no matter how subtly, as giving voice to our collective needs and wants as a nation, decided through free and regular elections. Public services and public servants are, in this sense, the products and agents giving expression to our democratic will. The 2015 election was one of two competing visions of the role of the public service in that endeavour.

Regional Sensibilities and Regional Voting

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It was a national election but there was little national about the vote. As in most Canadian elections, striking regional variations appeared on election night: the Conservatives, who received 60% of the vote in Alberta, garnered no more than 18% in Quebec or Nova Scotia; the NDP, who won 25% of the vote in Saskatchewan, received less than 14% in neighbouring Manitoba where the party governs provincially; and the Liberals who won a majority of the votes in each of the Atlantic provinces, including a remarkable 65% in Newfoundland and Labrador and 62% in Nova Scotia, mustered no more than a quarter of the votes in Alberta.

At exactly the mid-point of the campaign, on day 39 of the 78-day battle for power, the nightly tracking poll by Nanos Research, which proved to be the most accurate, put the Liberals in first place. It was the first poll to do so in months. The election turned and the die was cast. Although the NDP was trailing the Liberals nationally by only a percentage point, the NDP's inefficiently concentrated support in Quebec and B.C. at the time foreshadowed further Liberal gains at the NDP's expense. From then on, Liberal prospects brightened and the NDP's chances dimmed in a context where the major driver of the vote in the election was the question of which party had the best prospect of defeating the Conservative government. The other issues proved to be ephemeral flavours of the week—the Mike Duffy trial, a technical recession, a budget surplus, proposed deficit spending, migrants/refugees, the niqab, the Trans Pacific Partnership.

If Canadian elections often appear more like contests among regions than among parties, it is partly because parties contribute to this state of affairs by catering to distinct regional sensibilities. Consider where and what the party leaders said the day before the above-cited Nanos poll appeared. Justin Trudeau was in Atlantic Canada, the region with the highest rate of unemployment, pledging to reduce the waiting time for employment insurance applicants from two weeks to one week; Tom Mulcair toured a Montreal Bombardier facility promising to boost the aerospace industry in the province where it is concentrated; and Stephen Harper stopped in Mississauga, a city with many young families and two large post-secondary campuses, to offer increased federal contributions to education savings plans.

With the rise of broadcast media, particularly television in the 1960s, it became more difficult for leaders and parties to say one thing in one region and something contradictory in another region. Nevertheless, parties may accomplish the same thing with regionally tailored ads. For example, once the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois ran niqab-focussed ads in Quebec, three in ten self-identified NDP supporters reported that they were less likely to vote for that party. In contrast, only one in twenty NDP supporters in the rest of Canada said the niqab issue would affect their vote. On the issue of the Energy East pipeline, the Liberal and NDP leaders were equally evasive in the two solitudes.

The niqab issue seriously weakened the New Democrats in Quebec. Since Quebec accounts for 23% of Canada's ridings, the NDP's decline in the province lowered its national poll numbers. This clarified for voters in the rest of Canada that the NDP was unlikely to win. The diminished popularity of the NDP reported in the ubiquitous and closely monitored polls accelerated the consolidation of

the anti-government voters around the Liberals.

Party leaders also moved about strategically in different regions. The Greater Toronto Area received particular attention because it often determines, as it did in the four elections between 2004 and 2011, whether the complexion of the regime would be Liberal or Conservative and whether the outcome would be a majority or a minority government. For the Greens, who ran candidates in every province, it was British Columbia rather than the GTA that merited special attention. In that province, where the Greens captured well more than double the percentage of the vote they gained nationally, leader Elizabeth May spent all but 13 days in the first two months of the campaign, and held her Saanich–Gulf Islands seat. Tellingly, she failed to appear in any of the prairie provinces. In Newfoundland, another province she skipped, her party attracted no more than one percent of the vote.

Canadians may rightly be proud of their democracy. However, the conduct of Canadian campaigns, as the 2015 campaign demonstrated, suggest a regionally fragmented polity. 'Twas always thus.

Le NPD au Québec : doublé sur sa gauche

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Tant à l'échelle canadienne que québécoise, les résultats du Nouveau Parti démocratique (NPD) en 2015 furent bien en deçà des attentes. En tête dans les sondages au moment du déclenchement de l'élection, il pouvait de façon réaliste aspirer à prendre le pouvoir pour la première fois de son histoire. Au Québec, une vague encore plus importante qu'en 2011 était envisageable.

En 2011, le NPD avait créé la surprise. Avec 58 députés sur 75 et plus de 43% des voix, 60% de sa députation était alors issue du Québec. Conservant 16 députés et l'appui d'un électeur sur quatre, cette vague orange ne s'est pas reproduite en 2015. C'est le Parti libéral du Canada de Justin Trudeau qui, contre toute attente, a remporté la majorité des sièges en sol québécois.

À la mi-campagne, un glissement est apparu. Que ce soit en raison des hésitations de Thomas Mulcair sur la question du niqab ou d'un plan de campagne trop prudent en comparaison avec l'audace du PLC sur la question de l'équilibre budgétaire, plusieurs facteurs peuvent expliquer cette glissade. Avec une mauvaise campagne, le NPD n'a clairement pas été en mesure de se transformer en champion du changement.

À la lumière des résultats de 2015, nous tenterons donc de répondre à deux questions. Avec la chute du NPD et la remontée du PLC, l'élection de 2015 représente-t-elle un retour à la normale? Deuxièmement, alors que plus de 80% des électeurs québécois ont choisi des partis politiques opposés à l'indépendance, peut-on conclure à un réel déclin du clivage indépendance-fédéralisme?

Pour parler d'une élection de réalignement, il importe d'observer des changements significatifs quant aux partis dominants pendant au moins deux scrutins consécutifs. Or, même avec un recul important auprès de l'électorat québécois, en passant de 43% à 25% des appuis, l'enracinement du NPD au Québec peut se poursuivre. Relégué au statut de troisième parti en Chambre, la tâche sera certes plus difficile, mais il dispose du deuxième plus important nombre de députés au Québec, dont plusieurs de ses têtes d'affiches. Derrière le Parti libéral, mais devant le Parti conservateur et le Bloc québécois, il demeure une force politique réelle.

Malgré la défaite, l'élection de 2015 aura permis au NPD de fidéliser son propre électorat. Il peut maintenant revendiquer une base électorale réelle, mieux définie. En 2011, le NPD avait réussi à fédérer plusieurs catégories d'électeurs. Il est difficile de maintenir un niveau d'appuis élevé auprès de clientèles aussi diversifiées. Les résultats électoraux de 2015 lui permettront de poursuivre le développement de son organisation militante et l'établissement de liens plus soutenus auprès de certains segments plus circonscrits de l'électorat québécois. Ce sont des conditions essentielles pour y assurer son institutionnalisation. La performance du NPD au cours des deux dernières élections fédérales au Québec nous permet donc de croire qu'il y a bel et bien eu réalignement au sein de son système partisan.

Dans le même ordre d'idées, les résultats de 2015 nous permettent donc d'écarter l'hypothèse suggérant que 2011 ne fut qu'un accident de parcours. Ce ne fut pas une élection de déviation, mais bel et bien de réalignement faisant du Bloc québécois la principale victime de la transformation. En 2015, le Bloc n'a recueilli que 19,3% des voix. Sept de ses dix députés n'ont été élus qu'avec l'appui d'un électeur sur trois ou moins.

Le NPD au Québec : doublé sur sa gauche

Pour les Québécois, l'échec de l'Accord du Lac Meech en 1990, jumelé à la création du Bloc, a marqué la naissance d'un nouveau cycle politique plaçant le clivage Oui-Non lié au projet d'indépendance du Québec au cœur de la scène politique fédérale. Jusqu'en 2011, cela eu pour effet de polariser le débat politique entre le Bloc, représentant l'option souverainiste au Québec, et le PLC, la figure de proue de l'option fédéraliste. En 2015, même avec un discours du Bloc plus affirmé sur la question, l'indépendance du Québec ne fut pas un enjeu électoral déterminant. Au contraire, le retrait de l'appui traditionnel de grandes centrales syndicales québécoises au Bloc québécois a marqué une véritable rupture. Ce phénomène pourrait marquer la montée en force d'un clivage gauche-droite au détriment du clivage indépendance-fédéralisme comme déterminant du vote au Québec. À bien des égards, le PLC a d'ailleurs réussi à dépasser le NPD sur sa gauche. Ce fut notamment le cas sur l'enjeu des dépenses budgétaires pour lequel les libéraux sont apparus plus interventionnistes.

Ce nouveau cycle politique n'est pas sans conséquence. Rares sont les élections fédérales qui se traduisent par un réel morcellement de l'électorat québécois. Le clivage souveraineté-fédéralisme avait pour effet de cimenter les options en deux camps. Son déclin observé en 2011 et en 2015 se traduit par une volatilité certaine. S'il conditionne toujours le vote de certains électeurs, il n'est plus dominant auprès d'une partie importante de l'électorat. Au Québec, cela constitue probablement le principal effet du NPD. Même s'il est encore tôt pour confirmer le caractère durable de cette nouvelle réalité, il pourrait s'agir d'un changement structurel profond.

Provincial Premiers and the 2015 Federal Election Campaign

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Provincial premiers can be significant political players in federal election campaigns. Premiers can act as regional campaigners, focusing the national message through a more local lens. As well, supportive premiers can be reflective of a deep cooperation between the federal party and its provincial counterparts, providing organizational and strategic support. However, antagonistic premiers can be just as impactful, acting as opposing voices, and amplifying critiques of national party leaders. Adversarial relationships between premiers and the prime minister are as old as Canada itself: one of John A. Macdonald's constant thorns was his former Kingston law partner, Ontario Liberal Premier Oliver Mowat.

Adversarial relationships between Canada's premiers and Stephen Harper were noteworthy because of his laissez-faire approach to federal-provincial politics. For decades, formal institutions (e.g., first ministers' conferences) provided an arena for the relationships between premiers and prime ministers to play a role in the Canadian political landscape. But soon after the Conservative Party's victory in the 2006 election campaign, Prime Minister Harper stopped the practice of first ministers' conferences and led the federal government to play less of a role in provincial jurisdiction. The act of publicly rebuking a sitting prime minister is risky for premiers, given that it poisons a relationship with someone they need to work with. Yet within the vacuum created by Harper's disengagement from these institutions, premiers have largely been left to determine what kind of political relationships they want to have with their federal counterpart.

Heading into the 2015 election, Harper had experience dealing with opposition from sitting premiers during federal election campaigns. Partisan stripes were not predictive of where the antagonism came from, considering that the Conservative Party of Canada has no formal association with provincial parties. In 2008, Newfoundland and Labrador Progressive Conservative Premier Danny Williams launched a very aggressive public campaign against the federal Conservatives over disagreements concerning equalization payments under the moniker of "ABC: Anything But Conservative." More predictably, provincial Liberal premiers in both the 2008 and 2011 federal elections openly campaigned against Harper. Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest pushed the incumbent party on a number of policy areas including rail transit and the gun registry (2008) and federal-provincial fiscal arrangements (2011). Ontario Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty campaigned publicly against the Conservative party with focuses on federal-provincial fiscal arrangements (2008) and health care (2011).

During the 2015 federal election campaign, there were four different approaches among the premiers of Canada's four most-populous provinces. In British Columbia, Liberal Premier Christy Clark remained on the sidelines, noting she was ready to work with whoever formed government. This is indicative of a neutral approach and the unique brand of "Liberal" that the B.C. Liberal Party is—an informal coalition of Liberals and Conservatives. In Quebec, Liberal Premier Philippe Couillard was quiet outside of public comments about Quebec accepting hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria.

The most attention was paid to premier activity during the campaign in Alberta and Ontario. Fresh off her surprising provincial election victory,

Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley initially played it safe, not making any public partisan comments, even when Stephen Harper called the Alberta NDP government a disaster. But with the federal NDP falling in the polls late in the campaign, Notley publically endorsed federal NDP leader Tom Mulcair and the party while arguing that Harper was out of touch with Albertan values. In the waning days of the campaign, she then appeared on stage with Mulcair at an Edmonton rally. Meanwhile, in Ontario, Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne campaigned with Liberal leader Justin Trudeau and was very clear in her opposition to the incumbent Conservatives. Early on in the campaign, Wynne was aggressive with her critique, tweeting, "Harper's attack on retirement security can only be described as a blatant attack on the people of Ontario." Observers watched these premiers' actions with intrigue. Wynne had an approval rating of only 31%, Notley was at 50%; Wynne's involvement seemed risky while Notley's seemed to be a curiosity.

For the federal Liberals, a premier's involvement or lack thereof did not appear to make a difference. With premiers in each province playing a different role, the results were positive across the board. In terms of seat count, the Liberals went from third place in Ontario and British Columbia and second place in Quebec to first place in all three (11 seats to 80 in Ontario, 7 to 40 in Quebec and two to 17 in British Columbia). On the other hand, while at this early stage it is difficult to tell whether Notley's endorsement hurt Mulcair, it seemingly did not help, with the NDP holding on to one Alberta seat but seeing their popular vote decrease in the province from 16.8% to 11.6%. The results suggest that while premiers may decide to play a role in federal campaigns, their impact is anything but predictable.

All Politics is Local: The Campaign to Put Urban Issues on the Election Agenda

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Municipal leaders routinely seek election goodies from political parties eager for local votes. But the country's big-city mayors took these lobbying efforts a step further in the 2015 federal election with a coordinated campaign to convince Canadians to keep urban issues in mind when voting. Their goal was to make urban platforms central to parties' electoral fortunes. Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi boldly asserted that "whoever gets the cities right gets to be prime minister."

Launching their campaign last February, the mayors used a number of communication tactics to put urban issues on the election agenda. The pre-writ period saw them target movers and shakers in Ottawa, including through a cover story in *Power & Influence* magazine. The mayors took a broader approach during the election itself. Individual efforts to draw public and media attention to urban issues ranged from Ottawa's Jim Watson organizing an election debate at city hall to Calgary's Nenshi posting the parties' responses to a series of questions to a special website. Joint actions included mayors touring Toronto's YWCA Elm Centre in late September to draw attention to affordable housing and staging a series of press conferences, media statements, and social media postings just days before the election to urge Canadians to "vote for cities." The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) supported these efforts by creating election websites (such as www.citiescan.ca) that provided visitors with information on key municipal issues, tips on how to promote these issues, and tools to directly lobby candidates.

These communication efforts had a number of strengths. First, the mayors concentrated on three key issues among the many affecting municipalities today: infrastructure, transit, and affordable housing. A focused message no doubt made it easier for journalists to cover municipal issues, voters to understand them, and political parties to respond to them. Municipal leaders who present a long wishlist tend to get ignored, argued Montreal councillor Guillaume Lavoie: "By demanding everything, you get nothing." The Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP vowed to address the three priorities in their own way, though the success of the mayors' communication strategy will depend upon the extent to which the victorious Liberals keep their campaign promises.

A second strength of the municipal campaign was the fact that the mayors appeared to present a united front on these issues. Their coordinated calls for action on infrastructure, transit, and housing made it harder for parties to avoid addressing these expensive policy issues. And while municipalities vary in their specific needs, the mayors' consistent messaging meant their communication efforts were more likely to be effective in putting these concerns on the federal election agenda. The mayors should consider extending this high-level campaign into the post-election period and remaining united in pushing for federal attention to infrastructure, transit, and affordable housing.

A third strength of the municipal campaign was its digital-media component. The large number of issues raised by different political actors during the 11-week federal election meant that getting municipal perspectives into the news on a consistent basis was going to be a challenge. The FCM's election website provided voters not only with important information about municipal issues and why the organization believes they need to be addressed but also side-by-side com-

parisons of the major parties' platforms on each of the identified issues. By clicking on a button, visitors could also send a tweet or email to a local candidate urging them to make a commitment to Canadian municipalities.

One drawback of the digital campaign, though, was the call to use the #cdnmuni and #elxn42 hashtags for election tweets about municipal issues. The #cdnmuni hashtag included non-election tweets about local governance, while the #elxn42 hashtag incorporated tweets of varying election topics. Nor did Twitter users always use both hashtags when tweeting about municipal election issues. A single hashtag would have been more successful in creating and sustaining an online election conversation about urban issues. The mayors and FCM might consider creating such a hashtag to keep the national conversation about urban affairs going, ensuring that the time, money, and effort expended on this communication effort has ramifications long after the election.

The most important strength of the municipal campaign, however, was its contribution to fostering political participation among Canadians. By providing voters with information and opinions about municipal issues, questions to pose to candidates at the door, and advice on how to stage all-candidate debates, the mayors and FCM encouraged citizens to become more actively informed about and involved in politics. In short, they did not treat voters as spectators to the political game but as key political actors in the Canadian democratic process.

Horserace Journalism under Stress?

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www.mun.ca/posc/people/matthews.php

A series of prominent "poll failures" have captured the headlines in recent years. The surprise return to power of governments in Alberta and British Columbia in 2012 and 2013, respectively, are salient Canadian examples; in spring 2015, political observers globally were stunned by the Conservatives' majority victory in what the polls had suggested was a hotly contested British general election.

These events have not gone unnoticed in the Canadian press, and stories about "the trouble with polling these days" featured in the 2015 campaign. Prior to the election, professional pollsters were sufficiently worried about the state of their industry to organize a new standard-setting body. Pollsters have good reason to be worried. In addition to the proliferation of modes of survey research not based on traditional, probabilistic sampling methods, pollsters relying on conventional methodologies have suffered a steep decline in response rates. Reflecting on the phenomenon, one prominent Canadian pollster noted that response rates to live-interview telephone polls had fallen from a high of nearly 80% thirty years ago to a low of 10 percent, or even less, today.

Did this context influence the reporting of the horserace in this election? More precisely, did any of the new uncertainty about poll results condition how journalists reported the polls? While some analysts have suggested pollsters actually did rather well this year, particularly in forecasting the final result in the last days of the campaign, reporters, nonetheless, arguably had good reason to be circumspect in their treatment of polls.

Success in predicting election-day voting, furthermore, is only indirectly relevant to judging the quality of the polls during the campaign. Given the seeming importance of the horserace—especially the relative performances of the Liberals and NDP—to voters' decisions in this election, whether pollsters and the media supplied voters with a proper rendering of the electoral landscape before election day is just as important as judging the success of pollsters on election day.

To offer a preliminary assessment of how polls were reported in 2015, I collected and analyzed online stories reporting the horserace over the last 15 days of the campaign (October 4-18).[1] The Google News search tool was used to identify unique stories from Canadian websites mentioning 1.) the word "poll" (or its derivatives) and 2.) either two or more of the major parties (Liberal, Conservative, NDP) or the words "Canada" and "election." The search was limited to 14 national and regional news organizations, including both print and broadcast sources (e.g., *The Globe and Mail*, Global TV, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*). Stories focusing on sub-national (e.g., provincial) horseraces were excluded. The final set of 57 stories was then analyzed by an experienced coder. The coding protocol was designed to capture content implying that polls were an uncertain indicator of the state of the national horserace. The protocol aimed to identify both manifest and latent content. Mundane references to statistical concepts that capture uncertainty (e.g., margins of error) were not coded.

In short, only a small fraction of the stories suggested, in some way, that

1 would like to acknowledge the superb research assistance of Joshua Smee, who worked uncommonly quickly—but also carefully—in compiling and coding the database of stories on which this analysis relies.

the results of polls were an uncertain indicator of the horserace. Just 14% of stories explicitly referred to methodological challenges facing pollsters. Fewer than one in 10 stories mentioned pollsters' prediction failures in previous elections (in Canada or elsewhere). Only one of the 57 stories in the sample referred to controversy regarding the polling industry's methods or the reporting of results. All told, under 16% of stories referred explicitly to at least one of these three reasons that an informed voter might be uncertain about the reported polls. An indicator designed to capture latent uncertainty about the polls conveys a similar impression: roughly 11% of stories implied, in some way, that poll results may not be a highly reliable indicator of how the public will vote. Confining the analysis to stories where the central topic was a horserace poll produces similar results: around 19% of such stories explicitly referred to a reason for uncertainty about polls, while roughly 13% of horserace-focused stories implied more generally that polls may be unreliable.

These findings suggest that although many commentators have acknowledged the challenges faced by pollsters in recent years, journalists reporting the polls in 2015 experienced little of this stress. Poll reporting, at least over the campaign's final weeks, conveyed little of the uncertainty informed observers have expressed about the quality of polls. For voters, the effect may have been an unjustified level of confidence in poll information circulated during the campaign. Given the widely presumed significance of strategic voting in this election, such over-confidence may have had real consequences for electoral choice.

Canadian Pollsters and the 2015 Canadian Election: Did They Get It Right?

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Readers might recall the iconic 1948 photograph of newly elected US President Harry Truman holding above his head the *Chicago Tribune* with the erroneous headline "Dewey Wins!" Like the airline industry, for pollsters it sometimes seems that it is only the crashes people remember (Moore, 1992: 313). More recently, public confidence in the Canadian polling industry was shaken by both the 2012 Alberta and 2013 BC provincial elections during which the polls consistently and incorrectly foretold a change in government. However, to some extent confidence was regained when the polls correctly gauged outcomes for the 2014 Quebec and 2015 Alberta elections.

Looking back at the Canadian federal elections of 2006, 2008, and 2011, pollsters provided generally reliable measures of voter intentions in the final days of the federal campaign, with most being within a few points of the actual vote for each of the major parties. Furthermore, during the 2011 federal election in which pollsters used various survey methods, including surveys based on Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technologies, online surveys, and the traditional live telephone interview, most firms captured shifts in the final week towards Jack Layton's NDP (Adams, 2015: 365).

So, how did pollsters perform in the final days of the 2015 federal election? The election began with the NDP slightly in the lead, the Conservatives in a close second position, and the Liberals placing third. Within a few weeks it was shaping up to be a three-way battle. After the Labour Day weekend, the NDP began to wane while the Liberals began moving into second and then first place.

The table below provides an overview of results based on press releases put forward by each of the major national polling firms in the final days of the campaign. The second column on the left provides the dates in which surveys were conducted, with the third column providing the methodology used by each firm. When comparing the results with the polling results, Nanos Research with telephone surveys and Forum with IVR interviewing were the closest in predicting the massive shift in support to the Liberal Party. The right hand column provides the total difference for each firm when comparing their polling results with the actual vote percentages for each party. In all cases, with one exception, the closer to the October 19 date that the surveys were fielded, the smaller the total difference was between a pollster's numbers and the actual outcome. But even for those firms with relatively higher figures of difference, the differences

Final Pre-election polls, 2015

Polling Firm and Media Outlet	Fielding Dates	Method	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Bloc	Grn	Difference
Actual Vote	October 19, 2015	Vote	31.9%	39.5%	19.7%	4.7%	3.4%	-
Nanos/Globe&Mail-CTV	Oct 16-18	N=2,400 Telephone	30.5	39.1	19.7	5.5	4.6	3.8
Forum/Toronto Star	Oct 16-18	N=1,373 IVR	30	40	20	6	3	5.2
EKOS/iPolitics	Oct 16-18	N= 2,122 IVR/Telephone	31.9	35.8	20.4	4.9	5.6	6.8
Ipsos-Reid/Global News	Oct 15-17	N=2,503 Online/ Telephone	31	38	22	4	4	6.0
Léger/Le Devoir-Journal de Montréal	Oct 13-16	N=2,086 Online	30	38	22	6	4	7.6
Angus Reid Institute	Oct 13-16	N=2,022 Online	31	35	22	5	5	9.6
Mainstreet/Postmedia	Oct 14-15	N=5,546 IVR	33	38	21	5	4	4.8

are mostly quite small within each of the columns for each party.

It is one thing to gauge popular support for each national party. It is another thing to predict electoral outcomes. This is in large part due to the electoral system using the first-past-the-post system by which 338 ridings serve as the basis by which parties are elected to the House of Commons. One might say, therefore, that polls are at best "a rudimentary way for assessing how many seats each party will win" (Adams, 2015: 365). To address this deficiency, many now turn to seat projections based on polling data and discernible swings in the results to determine probable outcomes (for a detailed account of these models see Kay, 2009).

While the seat-projection models might have worked for some elections, this was not the case in the Canadian federal election of 2011 in that they failed to foretell the Conservative majority victory (Turcotte, 2011: 210). For 2015, Table 2 provides results from three sets of projections provided just prior to the end of the national campaign, with the right hand column showing the summed difference between projections provided by EKOS, the Laurier Institute, and the threehundredandeight.com website operated by Eric Grenier and released through the CBC. They demonstrate that while predicting the popular vote is increasingly an exact science, it is far more difficult to project seat counts.

For all three sites, the 2015 projections provided by EKOS had the least number of summed differences between the outcomes and what the firm projected for each party (66), followed by Eric Grenier's website (82), and the Laurier Institute (102). In the case of Grenier's projection, a margin of error for the number of expected seats was also provided, with a range of 124 to a 161 seats. Such margins were neither provided by EKOS nor the Laurier Institute. Regardless of whether or not margins were calculated, none of the three predicted a Liberal majority.

This brief overview of the results from pollsters and those providing seat projections shows that each firm was able to show the direction in which the October electoral winds were blowing. Those who followed the polls, including this writer, were not surprised to witness the victory of Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party, yet from this summary all were undoubtedly surprised at the size of the majority win.

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Seat projections

	Date of Projection		CPC	LPC	NDP	BQ	Grn	Differences in Seats
Actual Seats		338 Seats	99	184	44	10	1	
EKOS	Oct 19	338 Seats	116	151	54	16	1	66
Eric Grenier	Oct 18	338 Seats	118	146	66	7	1	82
Laurier Institute	Oct 18	338 Seats	115	140	79	3	1	102

Better Together? Poll Aggregation and Canadian Election Forecasting

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Do polls affect electoral fortunes in Canada? Evidence of a bandwagon effect is inconclusive, but recent empirical evidence suggests that many Canadians do indeed use polls as political information to inform their vote.[1] The emergence of strategic voting as a dominant theme during the 2015 federal election campaign brings polling into sharp focus as an influential source of information for voters. To the extent that voters rely on election forecasts to make voting decisions, the accuracy of these forecasts could have significant repercussions.

Canadian polling firms have a mixed record when it comes to predicting election outcomes. Although a number of pollsters' forecasts of the 2015 federal election were within reasonable proximity to the actual results, few if any were unscathed in previous elections where polls deviated substantially from the final outcome. Many pollsters tacitly if not explicitly acknowledge that simple random samples are no longer achievable for the most part. The consequence is that much more emphasis is placed on statistical adjustment for data after they have been collected; these practices differ by polling firm. These differences can lead to systematic variation in vote intention estimates among polling firms.[2] Conceptually, this variation can be distinguished by "house effects," the degree to which each pollster's vote intention estimates systematically deviate from the industry average unique; and by "bias," which can be defined as the difference between where each pollster estimates the result to be in expectation and where it ends up in reality.

A method to estimate and correct for these problems among individual polling firms is poll aggregation. The basic premise of poll aggregation is simple: information from multiple polls is systematically combined to increase the precision of a forecast when compared to the use of a single poll.

Canada is no stranger to the phenomenon of poll aggregation, with Éric Grenier's threehundredeight.com being the most well-known of a handful of aggregators. During the 2015 campaign, threehundredeight.com registered 7.1 million hits, which, according to Grenier, "smashed the site's previous records set during the 2011 federal election campaign." The performance of the site is an indication of the growing popularity of poll aggregation as a source of political information in Canada.

The accuracy of Canadian poll aggregators in forecasting election outcomes, however, has not kept apace with the performance of their American counterparts, which have consistently produced reliable forecasts despite systematic variation in vote intention. For example, Simon Jackman and Drew Lizner's use of dynamic linear models, which provide a systematic way to incorporate information from multiple polls, have proven highly successful in the American case.

To test whether this approach would increase the accuracy of forecasting Canadian election outcomes, Vox Pop Labs developed a poll aggregator called The Signal, which applies such a model to campaign polls as they were released throughout the 2015

1 André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Neil Nevitte, "Do Polls Influence the vote?" in *Capturing Campaign Effects*, ed. H.E. Brady and R. Johnston (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 263-279. Yannick Dufresne, Gregory Eady, Jennifer Hove, Peter Loewen, and Clifton van der Linden, "Media Campaign Events during the 2011 Canadian Federal Election: Examining Campaign Effects with Big Data," working paper available online at: http://voxpoplabs.com/papers/pollEffects2011.pdf.

2 Mark Pickup and Richard Johnston, "Campaign Trial Heats as Electoral Information: Evidence from the 2004 and 2006 Canadian Federal Elections," *Electoral Studies* 26 (2007): 460-76.

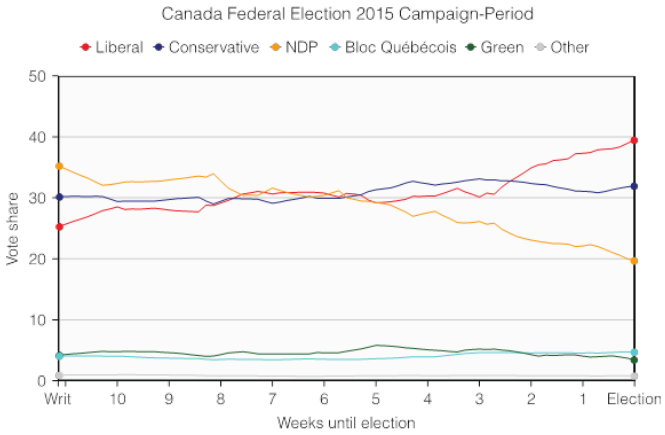
Canadian federal election campaign. Given the apparent public appetite for election forecasts and the increasing if anecdotal sense that the information they contain may influence strategic voting decisions, testing new methods to increase the accuracy of poll aggregators in Canada is not only a matter of intellectual curiosity but also a question of enhancing the diversity and quality of voter information. These methods can also provide an accurate rendering of how vote share changed during the campaign, as displayed in the graph below.

This graph shows vote share for each party across time during the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign. Daily vote share estimates were calculated using a dynamic linear model, adjusting for pollster house effects, as estimated using polls from 2011 until election day and using the election result itself as additional data with a house effect of zero.

Ultimately, of the dozen poll aggregators that provided forecasts of the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign, The Signal offered the most robust result. On average, its final vote share forecast was 0.9 percentage points from the resulting vote share for each party, and 9 seats, on average, from the seat share. It ranked second on both measures, but was more consistently accurate across the two.

One cannot, of course, compare model performance using the results of a single election. Indeed, one election is effectively a single data point. Although we have compared the model to other well-known forecasters for past federal and provincial elections, for which the model performs exceptionally well, it is only with more data—more elections—that its performance will and should be judged.

Despite the use of a simple proportional swing model, the seat share model proved highly successful.[3] Were the vote share for each region known in advance, the result would have been very close to the actual election result. (see Table 2)



This graph shows vote share for each party across time during the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign. Daily vote share estimates were calculated using a dynamic linear model, adjusting for pollster house effects, as estimated using polls from 2011 until election day and using the election result itself as additional data with a house effect of zero.

3 The model works by adjusting each riding's 2011 federal election vote share up or down by a constant so that the average vote share for a party across ridings in a given region is equal to the vote share forecast for that region as a whole. More technically, the proportional swing model adjusted riding-level vote share proportionally on the logistic scale using a multinominal function such that the parties' vote share at the riding level summed to one. Average party vote share in each region was weighted by voter turnout in the 2011 federal election.

Ultimately, poll aggregation provides important and potentially influential information to voters during election campaigns, particularly in cases where voters are compelled to vote strategically. One can speculate that certain poll aggregators command more public credibility than do individual polls. The methodology employed by poll aggregators thus warrants careful scrutiny, with a view toward providing Canadians with consistently accurate information upon which to base their decisions. In the future, we hope that these methods will continue to be refined, and their benefits and drawbacks fleshed out using appropriate measures of success.

Table 1

SEAT SHARE							
	LPC	CPC	NDP	BQ	GPC	Other	MAE
CVM Election Model (CVM Marketing Inc.)	178	115	44	1	0	0	5.3
The Signal (Vox Pop Labs)	160	120	50	7	1	0	9
The Globe's Election Forecast (Paul Fairie)	149	115	62	11	1	0	11.6
Prediction Markets (Sauder School of Business)	147	115	67	7	2	0	13.3
CBC Poll Tracker/308 (Éric Grenier)	146	118	66	7	1	0	13.7
Predictionator (David Akin)	149	105	81	2	1	0	14.3
CDN Election Watch	142	119	66	10	1	0	14
Election Atlas (J.P. Kirby)	142	116	68	11	1	0	14
Too Close to Call (Bryan Breguet)	137	120	72	8	1	0	16.3
Le calcul électoral (Pierre Martin)	137	117	76	6	1	0	16.8
LISPOP (Wilfrid Laurier University)	140	115	79	3	1	0	17
Election Almanac (David MacDonald)	138	120	78	1	1	0	18.3
VOTE SHARE							
	LPC	CPC	NDP	BQ	GPC	Other	MAE
CDN Election Watch	37.3	32.4	20.1	4.9	4.3	–	0.8
The Signal	36.7	32	20.4	5.2	4	1.5	0.9
Too Close to Call	36.8	32.5	21.4	4.6	4.1	–	1.1
CBC Poll Tracker/308	37.2	30.9	21.7	4.9	4.4	0.9	1.3
CVM Election Model	37	31	22	4	4	–	1.4
Le calcul électoral	36.8	31.8	22.7	4.2	4.5	–	1.5
The Globe's Election Forecast	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Predictionator	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Prediction Markets	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Election Atlas	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
LISPOP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Election Almanac	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

This table shows the mean absolute error (MAE) for both seat share and vote share for each of the poll aggregators during the 2015 Canadian federal election. Because only The Signal and ThreeHundredEight provided vote share estimates for "Other" parties/candidates, only vote share for the major parties are used in the calculation of MAE.

Table 2

Party	Estimated seat share	Actual seat share
Liberal	178	184
Conservative	112	99
NDP	42	44
Bloc Québécois	5	10
Green	1	1
Other	0	0

This table shows seat shares estimates from the Signal's proportional swing model in which each region's actual election vote share is used to adjust each riding. In other words, if regional vote share had been estimated perfectly, this table shows what the seat share estimates would have been.

Digital Technology and Civic Engagement: The Case of Vote Compass

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Elections are increasingly contested online, with digital emerging as a third front in the so-called air and ground offensives of campaign strategy. But digital technologies also enable new modes of citizenship and serve as platforms for democratic participation.

The grassroots digital initiatives that rose to prominence during the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign were largely focused on one of three strategic aims. The first was to increase voter turnout, with specific emphases on new voters and the youth vote. The second was to encourage strategic voting, largely in an effort to unseat Conservative incumbents in ridings where a Liberal or New Democratic Party candidate had a reasonable chance of success. The third was to increase political knowledge among the electorate by presenting information about the political parties in an engaging and accessible format.

The outcome of the federal election campaign offers anecdotal support for the efficacy of digital initiatives. Voter turnout campaigns such as Vote Nation and established youth-engagement organizations such as Apathy is Boring likely enjoy a measure of satisfaction at the spike in eligible voters who cast a ballot in Canada's 42nd general election. Similarly, strategic voting initiatives such as Leadnow's Vote Together campaign arguably take it as validation of their efforts that many of the ridings they targeted saw their recommended candidate emerge victorious.

Evidence from American studies suggests that there is good reason to suspect that online initiatives such as these do tend to boost civic engagement. Enthusiasm about the prospects of digital technology for enhancing public participation in the mechanics of government has even resulted in the emergence of a new class of technology known as civic tech. It is difficult, however, to gauge the impact that Canadian civic tech has had on participation. In very few cases do we have sufficient empirical evidence to determine whether Canadian initiatives have contributed to their desired outcomes.

One of those few cases where sufficient data exists to offer preliminary insight into the effects of civic tech is that of Vote Compass, a civic engagement application run during election campaigns. The premise of the application is simple: users are surveyed on a range of topics germane to a particular campaign and, on the basis of their responses, are provided with an assessment of their proximity to the political parties running for election.[1]

Vote Compass is a non-partisan initiative developed and operated by independent research organization Vox Pop Labs in consultation with some of Canada's more distinguished political scientists. Its Canadian iterations—of which there have been ten to date—are sponsored and promoted by CBC-Radio Canada. Vote Compass registered upwards of 1.9 million unique users during the 2011 Canadian federal election and 1.8 million during the 2015 federal election.

The Vote Compass initiative has three primary aims: first, to increase electoral literacy by making available information regarding the policy proposals of the various political parties and helping users situate themselves in the political landscape; second,

1 For information on the Vote Compass methodology for determining user and party positions see http://voxpoplabs.com/votecompass/methodology.pdf.

to hold parties accountable to their publicly-stated policy positions; and third, to compel parties to be responsive to the citizens they are serving by acting as a unique source of public opinion data. Of these, only the first is currently empirically verifiable.

The 2011 Canadian Election Study (CES), which asked respondents whether or not they used Vote Compass during the course of the election campaign, demonstrates a positive correlation between political knowledge and Vote Compass use. While this is a promising preliminary finding, CES data do not permit closer examination into the causal direction between the two variables. Respondents were asked political knowledge questions in the same wave as Vote Compass use, which prevents us from stating conclusively as to whether Vote Compass use increases knowledge or—conversely—whether knowledgeable users have a higher propensity to use Vote Compass. Of course, these effects are not mutually exclusive. Using statistical matching methods to disentangle the causal relationship produces results that indicate a positive effect of Vote Compass use on political knowledge, but more research is required to validate these preliminary findings.

The more noteworthy observation from the CES, however, concerns the relationship between the use of Vote Compass and voter turnout. Vote Compass was not designed as a get-out-the-vote initiative. Its operators are committed to promoting an *informed* vote above all else. But regression analyses show that the use of Vote Compass has a statistically significant effect on its users' propensity to vote. That effect remains significant when controlling for conventional socio-demographics, political awareness, political interest, and partisanship. The effect on turnout is even stronger when analyzed by age group. The younger users are, the stronger the effect of using Vote Compass on their propensity to vote. For instance, voters aged 18 to 24 are estimated to be 10% more likely to vote after using Vote Compass than voters in the same age category that did not use the application.

The findings from the Vote Compass case are promising for proponents of civic tech in Canadian elections. While further research into the effects of Vote Compass and other civic engagement initiatives for electoral literacy and voter turnout is warranted, preliminary findings indicate that it had a meaningful and substantial effect on civic engagement in Canada in 2015.

Change above All Else: The Public Opinion Dynamics That Led to the Liberal Majority

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A desire for change is a powerful force in an election campaign and, more than anything else, it came to dominate voting behaviour and campaign strategy in the 2015 Canadian general election. When the campaign began, the three parties were separated by no more than seven points in most publicly released polling. The Liberals, a party that started the campaign in third, ended up winning. How did this happen?

Data collected by Abacus Data through six waves of survey research demonstrates that there was not a single campaign, but two campaigns focused on two separate ballot questions. The first campaign focused on whether the Conservative Party and, more importantly, its leader, Stephen Harper, deserved to be re-elected and whether a credible alternative was available to voters who desired change. The second campaign, operating in parallel, was about which opposition party was best able to defeat the Conservatives.

In power for almost a decade, Harper and the Conservative Party faced an electorate that craved change. At the start of the campaign, 50% of eligible voters had a negative impression of the prime minister, and three in four believed it was time for a change, most of whom felt it very strongly about it.

Facing such an environment, the only way that the Conservative Party could hope to be re-elected was by softening the desire for change, raising doubts about the alternatives, and ensuring that "change" voters did not consolidate behind one of the primary alternatives. In the end, the Conservative campaign was unable to achieve any of these objectives.

First, the desire for change held steady throughout the campaign. In the final weekend, 60% of eligible voters said it was definitely time for a change of government compared to only 20% who felt that the Conservative Party should definitely be re-elected.

Second, the Conservatives' efforts to stoke fears about the alternatives were unsuccessful. Most voters were not afraid of either an NDP or Liberal government.

Lastly, efforts to discredit Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau stopped working. In the months prior to the campaign, the Conservative ads arguing that he was "just not ready" were effective. Positive impressions of Trudeau declined from a high of 35% in February 2015 to a low of 30% in July 2015, just before the election was called. By the end of the campaign, Trudeau's favourables reached their highest point (44%), nine points higher than NDP Leader Tom Mulcair and 17 points higher than Harper.

At the same time as the Conservatives were attempting to improve their own opinion environment, the opposition parties were campaigning to define the choices available to those who wanted change.

Support for the federal NDP rose sharply in the months following the surprise win of its provincial counterpart in Alberta. But this newfound support—most polls had the NDP leading in vote intention and Mulcair was the most popular leader in the country—was likely soft, as many voters also admitted to knowing little about the NDP leader.

In an effort to position the party as a safe alternative to the Conservatives, the NDP promised to balance the federal budget if it won. Mulcair was positioned as an experienced leader who Canadians could trust to deliver

the change they were looking for. This strategy was dependent on the desire for change sustaining itself but also on a weak performance by Trudeau.

In contrast, the Liberals offered "change voters" a more ambitious and urgent version of change than the NDP. Promising to run deficits to pay for investments in infrastructure and committing to raise taxes on higher income Canadians to pay for a "middle-class tax cut," the Liberals were more successful at positioning themselves as the anti-Conservative, anti-Harper party. Furthermore, Trudeau's performance relieved those worried about his suitability to be prime minister.

By offering a more compelling choice, the Liberals persuaded those voters whose primary objective was to defeat the Conservatives that the Liberal plan and leader were most compelling. What started out as a 16 point lead for the NDP among those who definitely wanted change became a 16 point lead for the Liberals at the end of the campaign, leading to the surprise majority win for the Liberals on election day.

The 2015 Canadian general election was about change and there was little the incumbent Conservatives could do to reverse it. The Liberal campaign offered a more appealing choice to those who craved a new government and when it became clear that Justin Trudeau was best positioned to defeat the Harper Conservatives, change voters flocked to the Liberal side.

To review all the data cited in this article, please visit http://abacusdata.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Data-from-UBC-Press_Samara-Paper.pdf.

The Youth Vote in the 2015 Election

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politique.uqam.ca/corps-professoral/professeurs/167-harell-allison.html

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Young people in Canada have been notoriously absent from the ballot box in recent Canadian elections. Falling overall turnout in Canada has largely been attributed to the failure of younger generations to participate in elections. One of the primary factors behind this is young people's lack of interest and knowledge about electoral politics. Unlike past elections, there is reason to believe that the 2015 Canadian federal election garnered more interest and excitement among young people.

Overall turnout suggests that this election was far more likely to mobilize voters than recent past elections have. Elections Canada initially reported that 68.5% of eligible voters participated in this election, up from 58% and 61% in the previous two elections.

While numbers specific to youth are not yet available, uncertainty about the outcome likely drew their interest. People tend to vote more often when elections are competitive, and this election was particularly exciting on that front. The election began with a tight three-way race. This gives voters the impression that their vote is more likely to matter, which can be particularly important for those who have not yet established a long-term pattern of voting.

If we consider the major political parties' platforms (see the table below), the parties varied in the amount and tone of their focus on youth. The Liberals and the NDP had 66 and 61 mentions respectively. In the Liberal platform, mentions of youth are frequently linked to job training and opportunities, as well as to enhancing engagement in public life. Other key messages directed towards the young, refer to increasing student grants, as well as allowing the repayment of student loans only once a minimum yearly income of $25,000 is attained.

The NDP program also emphasizes job opportunities, adding that it would ensure fairer treatment of young workers, notably though access to employment insurance and better protection by modifying the Labour Code. The Green Party featured overall the smallest number of mentions about young people.

National party platform mentions targeting young people[1]

Party	"young" (voters / Canadians / people / person / Farmers / workers)	"students"	"youth"	Total	Platform Length (pages)
Conservative	9	22	18	49	159
Green	5	12	7	24	44
Liberal	20	38	8	66	88
NDP	20	14	27	61	81

1 The table excludes mentions appearing in budget sections and tables. One mention of "young British Columbians" was also counted in the first column. The Bloc Québécois was excluded because their platform was not available in a format that could be easily coded.

Given its relative length (almost twice as many pages as the Liberal platform) and its relatively low number of mentions (49), the Conservative campaign manifesto was arguably the least youth-oriented. Among the nine mentions of young Canadians, three related to young people who join street gangs or terrorist organizations. Similarly, out of 18 mentions of youth, 10 related to gangs or radicalization. "Student(s)" appeared 22 times, often in connection with indirect support measures such as increases for the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) and tax credits for scholarships.

The difference in party platforms parallels the tendency of young people to prefer centre and left-leaning parties. This likely benefited the Liberals in an election in which, reports suggest, it ran a particularly effective ground campaign. The Liberal Party also attracted young people because of the relative youth of its leader, combined with its message of change. Polling data suggests that Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party "brand" were both most appreciated by those under 30.

In contrast, the Conservative Party's "Just Not Ready" criticism of Trudeau called into question his relative youth. This had the dual effect of associating him with young voters while potentially turning these same voters away from the Conservatives. The tendency of youth to shy away from right-wing parties means that this election more generally, combined with the CPC's failure to speak much to this constituency, made the often-heard expression of "ABC: Anything But Conservative"—particularly salient among youth.

The mobilization effort by parties may have been helped as well by new efforts by Elections Canada to reach young voters. In particular, Elections Canada ran a unique pilot project that set up 72 temporary returning offices where people could vote by special ballot ahead of election day. Primarily, these were placed on 39 university campuses. Over 70,000, primarily young, voters took advantage of these temporary polling stations.

In the end, the 2015 Canadian federal election provided good conditions for increasing turnout among young electors: a competitive election that included mobilization efforts aimed at youth and a centrist party led by a young leader with a message of change.

A Branding (and Rebranding) Reality

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Academic analysis is penetrating when it is provocative. This is especially important where communication, strategy, and democracy are concerned. Some matters emerging from Election 2015 that warrant deeper consideration include the following.

1. The election was foremost about leaders' personal brands. In campaign 2015, all parties and the media were squarely focused on leadership, to the detriment of the countless individuals who are involved in a deliberative and pluralistic democracy. So much energy was invested in discussing personalities that many Canadians likely employed valence politics: their vote was predicated on little more than whether or not they liked and trusted a leader, in the expectation that person was leading a party whose policies were in line with the elector's values. If it is a problem that communication trends are contributing to the centralization of authority then we must assume this trend will not vanish because a new head of government happens to be charismatic.

2. The news media and social media are like a swarm of bees, buzzing from the latest opinion survey to the newest pseudo-scandal to celebrity-style diversions to real news. In campaign 2015, media swarming ranged from the serious (the Duffy trail, Syrian refugee crisis) to the semi-serious (candidates' dismissals for past comments posted on social media) to the ridiculous (discussion about Stephen Harper's reference to "old stock Canadians" during one of the leaders' debates). In the moment, dramatic media coverage seems all-enveloping and urgent. Phenomenal resolve is required by political parties to stick to a core brand message.

3. The Liberal Party brand's primary selling point was, is, and always will be its projection as the party of national unity and of Canadian federalism. It is no coincidence the Liberal Party's electoral fortunes suffered with the diminished threat of Quebec nationalism. The 2015 election presented an opening for the Trudeau Liberals to propel national unity to the forefront on another dimension: uniting the country in the face of an acerbic Conservative government and prime minister. An image of unity, patriotism, and Canadian values cuts to the core of the Liberal brand.

4. The Conservative Party handed a majority government to the Liberals by failing to launch provocative negative television advertising in the campaign's final hours. The Liberal Party ran negative ads successfully in the final days of Election 2004, invoking fear about the Harper Conservatives' policy stances. Perhaps Canadians' celebrity-style attachment to Justin Trudeau is why the Conservatives got uncharacteristically weak-kneed when so much was on the line. Understanding why Conservative strategists chose not to deploy hard-hitting negative advertising using sinister tones and horror-style images would be helpful for political marketing scholarship.

5. There was insufficient public scrutiny of the platform of the party that now controls the House of Commons and the executive branch of government. Despite the extraordinarily long campaign, there was little discussion about the finer points of the Liberal platform. For instance, in Parliament, the Liberal Party has plans for more free votes, a non-partisan process for appointing senators, the creation of a prime minister's Question Period, reduced use of omnibus bills, and legislation by mid-2017 to enact electoral reform. In government, the PMO and ministers'

offices are to be subject to access to information requests, an advertising commissioner will provide oversight of government ads, there will be gender balance in cabinet, and scientists will face few restrictions on speaking out publicly. Political parties will be limited in how much they can spend between elections and an independent commission will organize leaders' election debates. Such procedural matters are understandably "inside baseball" to most Canadians. The point is that on these and other policies the Liberals will be able to use their majority to push things through.

6. The Conservative Party must understand that its brand's kryptonite is the propensity of conservatives and libertarians in its caucus to be seen as mean and uncaring, especially towards politically vulnerable populations. During the campaign, the Conservative Party was tone deaf to public sympathy for the plight of Syrian refugees, and the party's gambit to provoke controversy about women wearing niqabs bordered on racism. These issues congealed to reignite the politically incorrect image of its legacy parties, Reform and Canadian Alliance. An image of intolerance caused a brand rethink among the many Canadians who demand greater compassion. Promoting a political agenda of low taxes need not be confused with matters that invoke the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

7. Tom Mulcair ought to launch the New Democratic Party into a major rebranding exercise. Social democrats should engage in deep pan-Canadian consultation about what today's NDP is. This should culminate with a new party name, symbols and market positioning. The "new" in New Democratic Party is meaningless. An acronym is difficult to form an emotional connection with, and it causes brand incongruity in French Canada (NDP versus NPD). The colour orange deserves a rethink, given that purple now seems fashionable among progressives. If the NDP is indeed as ready for change as it professed during the campaign, then change should begin with the party brand.

These are just some of the angles that party analysts and democratic theorists conducting campaign post-mortems ought to consider.