

Moving Pieces: A Comparison of Canadian Provincial Party Platforms

by

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Abstract

An idealized description of elections suggests they center around competing visions for the future of the state. Campaign platforms provide parties with the opportunity to present these competing visions and for voters to decide among them. In order to understand what issues are being discussed, researchers must analyze what policies are being prioritized and emphasized. While party policy shifts have been studied more frequently internationally, this type of platform-focused research is less popular in the Canadian context. This thesis aims to fill this gap by analyzing the continuity and shifts in Canadian provincial party platforms. I ask the following question: what policy priorities do provincial parties in Canada set out in their platforms, and why do these differ and change? By advancing a framework based on identifying and coding policy priorities articulated in platform section titles, I argue and substantiate that variables such as time, party family, and province/ region influence the priorities provincial parties set out in their platforms. Through a comprehensive analysis of over 20 provincial parties and 100 platforms, this study demonstrates how Liberal parties, New Democratic parties, and right-wing parties in Canada such as Progressive Conservative parties adopt different campaign strategies. Of the major party families, Liberal parties had the highest percentage of social issues as the first chapter topic, while New Democratic parties were the most likely of all three party brands to cover economic and business topics in their platforms' first section. Parties in Western Canada were also more likely to prioritize economics and business topics first compared to parties in Eastern provinces. Further, when looking at consistency levels over time, many provincial parties were inconsistent in their policy priorities and emphasis; however, the NDP were the most likely to be classified as *somewhat consistent*. Findings also suggest that parties who experienced changes in leadership demonstrated only slightly lower levels of consistency,

despite the significant influence of the leader over party decisions in Canadian politics. When comparing consistency levels under the same and different leaders, I found that the more activist-dominated New Democratic Party showed similar consistency levels under the same and different leader, results that are compatible with existing research. Finally, despite differences in policy prioritization levels, differences in average space dedicated to policy issues by party family is minimal. Ultimately, this study reinforces that in Canadian politics, political parties show their values and build their brand not necessarily through their policy positions, but through their priorities. A concluding discussion highlights the value and significance of this research and suggests areas of future exploration about Canadian political parties.

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Alberta
BC	British Columbia
GRN	Green Party
LIB	Liberal Party
MB	Manitoba
NB	New Brunswick
NDP	New Democratic Party
NL	Newfoundland and Labrador
NS	Nova Scotia
ON	Ontario
SK	Saskatchewan
SP	Saskatchewan Party
PC	Progressive Conservative Party
PEI	Prince Edward Island
UCP	United Conservative Party
WR	Wildrose Party

Introduction

If Canadian parties are the gatekeepers to Canadian democracy, then their platforms are key to understanding the political agenda. Despite variations throughout their history, parties typically present voters with campaign platforms, a function that is both important and public, but also understudied. The political platform, together with the party leader and candidates, simplify the electoral process, providing voters with a combined package on which to vote (Dyck 2012: 206). Internally, platforms also act as a strategic tool that binds a party together and ensures everyone stays on message (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 125).

Despite their importance, the literature on party platforms in Canada is limited. Most election research in Canada instead focuses on political communications, electoral institutions, and electoral behaviour. Research on behind-the-scenes campaign work is also scarce, with the publishing of *Inside the Campaign: Managing Elections in Canada* representing the first Canadian book to detail such activities (Esselment and Giasson 2020: 208).

Internationally, more research is available that focuses on party manifestos as a policy document, especially through the enormous contribution of the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP). This project represents a ground-breaking empirical contribution to the field through hand-coding manifestos, creating a repository of data and publications that are more easily accessible. The main goal of the project is to provide comparable estimates of party policy positions across numerous countries (Pétry and Collette 2009: 2). Specifically, the CMP coding framework focuses on parties' different *positions* on a given set of policy dimensions, as it is designed to position parties on a left-right scale. Because of this, those using the CMP coding framework encounter issues with measuring the relative *importance*, or salience, attached to issues, which is independent of their party positions.

Further, despite the coding of many federal Canadian platforms, publications incorporating this type of platform-focused research is less popular in the Canadian context. This points to a greater need to consider the impact of political platforms as policy documents in Canada. Ultimately, my study is motivated by the following three research questions:

- What policy priorities do provincial parties set out in their platforms?

- Why do provincial parties change policy priorities over time?
- What explains differences among Canadian provincial parties' priorities?

To answer these questions, I examined almost 100 different provincial platforms from the major parties in nine provinces across Canada. Specifically, I used a quantitative coding technique to identify policy priorities and analyze variations in provincial platforms across the following independent variables: provinces/ regions, party families, and time. These variables are based on literature which argues that provinces and regions in Canada are their own subnational “worlds” with varying demographic, historical, and economic make-ups, and the integration level of political parties with their “cousins” (i.e. parties of the same name across borders or at different levels of government) influence how similar their platform priorities and emphasis may be to parties in other provinces.

I analyzed these variables to determine the *prioritization* (i.e. ordering) and *emphasis* that provincial parties place on major policy areas within their platforms. In this study, I use the term *prioritization* to describe the order of policy topics in the platform, with the number rank indicating the earliest each policy topic was mentioned within the platform (i.e. the topics ranked 1 were listed first, ranked 2 were listed second, etc.). *Emphasis*, on the other hand, indicates the amount of space or attention within the platform given to issues as a percentage of the total platform.

Structure of Thesis

The lack of scholarly attention to the history and development of Canadian federal and provincial political platforms motivated the literature review on platforms in chapter one. Specifically, chapter one provides an overview of party platforms with a strong focus on Canadian and provincial platform development in order to provide important background information on the text under study in this thesis. I argue that political platforms are important and significant documents, not only in the campaign but also as both an indicator of and foundation for the political agenda. Chapter two reviews the literature on the theoretical expectations and foundations of the factors that are examined in my analysis: region/ province and party family. Chapter three provides an explanation of the methodological framework for this study.

Specifically, I define my use of the term ‘major’ parties, explain my rationale for choosing to study Canadian provinces, and clarify my coding decisions and steps.

The findings, which are presented in chapter four, are organized into two main sections: prioritization and attention (space) to issues. First, I provide an overview of the first topics in major parties’ provincial platforms within the study period, highlighting commonalities and differences between parties and provinces. Next, I determine and analyze the earliest mentions of topics within parties’ platforms and, drawing from the literature, I provide potential explanations for changes in prioritization levels. Specifically, I focus on partisan factors, regional patterns, and the influence of leadership and party status. In the second half of chapter four, I calculated and compared parties’ emphasis on issues shown by the amount of space dedicated to those issues within the platform. Similar to the first measure, these results were also analyzed through a regional/ provincial and partisan lens. I conclude that party platforms are not consistent over time; instead, prioritization and emphasis levels are influenced by factors such as party family and regionalism. Ultimately, platforms are not just a collection of policy problems; they reflect and define the priorities that voters are able to choose from, highlighting the importance of studying the options that parties provide. To conclude, chapter five provides an overview of the findings, and highlights the benefits of this type of research on other federations with similar subnational party systems, such as Australia and the United States, and in similar party systems where parties employ a sales-or market-orientated approach, such as in the United Kingdom.

Chapter 1: Political Party Platforms

Parties' platforms are important documents that affect elections and governments' agendas. However, academic research about platforms of Canadian parties is rare, and what does exist lacks a focus on policy. Specifically, election research tends to focus on political communication (Marland 2016), electoral institutions (Courtney 2004), electoral behaviour (Gidengil et al. 2012), and campaign tactics (Flanagan 2014). The exception to this is the relatively few political scientists who use the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) method to track the left/right ideological placement of Canadian parties (McGrane 2019, *Collette and Pétry 2014*, Koop and Bittner 2013). Esselment (2015: 180) found that, historically, Canadian parties rarely provided detailed and fully costed platforms. This practice changed after the federal Liberal Party released its *Red Book* in 1993, and policy-based, publicly available campaign platforms are now the norm. Yet, little academic research in Canada has been undertaken to understand how these documents are crafted, and why political parties change policy positions over time. For instance, Johnston et al. (1992) performed a comprehensive examination of the 1988 federal election, a campaign which featured a dramatic reversal in parties' positions on free trade; however, the authors focused on understanding public reaction to the switch, rather than uncovering the rationale behind it. Studying the development of platforms can present challenges for academic researchers, given the difficulty in getting interviews with those in positions of authority (Marland and Esselment 2019: 685) and the reluctance of platform directors to disclose trade secrets (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 124). Despite this, information on platforms can still be pieced together through published insider accounts, election studies, and memoirs.

History of Platforms

A platform is the most basic communications document from a party. It is regarded as “the only fully authoritative statement of the party policy” (Budge 1994: 455). The process of developing a platform changes over time and differs amongst parties, and a number of different actors are involved in its drafting. As a result, platforms also vary significantly in terms of their specificity, length, and importance in party messaging (Cross et. al 2015: 44).

Early politicians around the time of Confederation were less likely to have detailed and written platforms, relying more on mobilizing voters and speaking to gathered crowds

(Esselment 2015: 180; Nolan 1981: 33). In fact, Clarkson (2005: 7-8) found that Liberals, in regional meetings with high-profile locals, would announce policy resolutions that conflicted with other resolutions passed by Liberals in other regions. Parties started to use more campaign literature during the Laurier years of the late 19th century, posting in newspapers and printing materials and pamphlets (Nolan 1981: 33), and continued to release manifestos up until the late 1950s (Clarkson 2005: 270). Despite this, the trend in past political eras was to debate a sole topic (Esselment 2015: 180), keeping full and detailed platform commitments to a minimum. Incumbent parties' platforms were often simply elaborations on the record of the government (Clarkson 2005: 19-20; Esselment 2015: 180). Instead of outlining detailed policy plans for the future, parties used elections to outline their accomplishments while in government. The lack of details or a longer-term vision for Canada is evident in the Liberal Party's 1953 platform, which states in the introduction that "the Liberal Party is making one promise. And that is if you decide that we are the right people to carry on your affairs we will do our utmost to serve you as well as we would our own individual families" (Carrigan 1968: 208).

During a period within the 1960s and 1970s, parties avoided releasing a full platform. For example, the federal Liberals under leader Pierre Elliot Trudeau did not publish a comprehensive platform, preferring to hold daily surprise policy announcements. This provided the campaign more publicity (Taras 1996: 430-431) and more flexibility (Clarkson 2005: 270-271) versus a full platform release. Instead of relying on detailed and written platforms, voters looked to and judged parties more on leadership, local candidates, and the general party philosophy (Jeffrey 2010: 133-134).

This method of campaigning changed in the 1990s. The Liberals, under Jean Chrétien, introduced one of the most comprehensive and revolutionary platforms in Canadian political history to date (Flynn and Marlin 2018: 264; Esselment 2015: 179; Clarkson 2005: 270). Officially titled *Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada*, but dubbed the 'Red Book', the platform was unique due to its length, scope, and detail, covering numerous promises over 112 pages. The platform also pledged fiscal responsibility (Dobrowolsky 2006: 183), as the promises in the platform were fully costed by an economist (Esselment 2015: 179). The release of the platform was also noteworthy. The platform was released similar to a budget lockup, where reporters are given politically sensitive documents and prohibited from communicating with the outside world until the embargo is lifted. The party hoped reporters would give the

platform more weight, which reporters did (Martin 2008: 105-106). In order to counter this, the governing PCs released their own 'Blue Book', *The Taxpayer's Agenda*, 13 days after the Liberals released their own platform. However, this document was not as prepared as the Liberals' 'Red Book'. The PCs were pressured to quickly release a platform, forcing them to use the previous spring's budget estimates (Fulton, Janigan & Fisher 1993), after initially believing prior to the campaign that a formal and detailed platform would leave them vulnerable to criticism (McLaughlin 1994: 132). Ironically, though, this earlier decision meant the party was susceptible to attacks that they were unprepared, and their hurriedly released platform was criticized as being a frantic attempt to copy the Liberal's Red Book (Taras 1996: 431).

Another notable platform that followed this model was the Ontario Progressive Conservative's 1995 'Common Sense Revolution' (CSR). Like the Liberals in advance of 1993, the PCs were in opposition before the 1995 Ontario election. The PCs spent a great deal of time conducting extensive consultations before drafting their platform (Cross et al. 2015: 44-45). The CSR was a cornerstone of the PC campaign, and the party, which released the platform a year ahead of the election, was constantly showcasing it.

The Liberals' 1993 Red Book, and those following it, set a new standard for election platforms in Canada. Increasingly, political parties are offering platforms to voters that are comprehensive, wide-ranging, and costed (Flynn 2011: 249-250). The public has also increasingly expected parties to deliver on their campaign promises, looking to hold politicians accountable at the next election for the commitments in their platforms (Esselment 2012: 123). Books and scholarly articles have even been published assessing the fulfillment of campaign promises (Birch and Pétry 2019). As a result, parties are increasingly characterising their platforms as pledges, contracts, or guarantees, taking personal responsibility for their implementation.

Despite the general trend toward comprehensiveness, the level of policy detail within a platform can vary. Flynn (2011: 245) found that winning federal parties from 1984 to 2008 came into power with fairly extensive policy plans outlined in their platforms. Another example of a platform with very detailed plans for governing is the Alberta NDP's platform during the 2015 provincial election. However, not all winning parties present voters with platforms including

extensive policy plans. For example, the Ontario PCs won the 2018 provincial election with a platform that was light on policy details and not fully costed.

Platform and Brand

A party's brand is one of their most important assets. While the value of the brand itself is intangible, branded communication consists of more tangible elements such as names, logos, symbols, slogans, visuals, and messages. Branding provides parties with the advantage of simplification and reiteration. For instance, core information is repeated, most often in an uncomplicated manner (Marland 2016: 12). Through simplifying and repeating a message, branded communications saves time for the reader; instead of relying on the cognitive ability of voters to process information and stay informed on political issues, a brand can provide cues and signals to aid in decision-making. Put differently, a brand represents a summary for a voter about a party or candidate (Cosgrove 2011: 107).

One of the most important elements of a party's brand is their platform. The platform exemplifies strategies used in political branding: communication must be simplified and repeated, and images, logos, and colours are used consistently throughout. Wesley and Moyes (2014: 74-75) argue that this forges external trust with voters and internal unity among party members and activists. The size of the platform itself can also indicate a party's brand (or re-branding efforts). For example, the Manitoba NDP dramatically cut down the length of its platforms in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 provincial elections as part of their re-brand (ibid: 81-82). However, maintaining a brand or re-branding can be especially challenging in the political environment, given the potential for changing public opinion, voter fatigue, and unpopular records.

The platform also provides evidence of the political marketing strategy that the party has chosen. Lees-Marshment (2001) established the theoretical framework that differentiates between the product-oriented party, which focuses on what it stands for and believes in, refusing to change ideas; the sales-oriented party, which prioritizes selling its arguments to voters; and the market-oriented party, which designs products to suit voter demands. It is expected that parties with platforms that vary widely over time are employing a market-oriented approach, while those that stay relatively consistent demonstrate a product- or sales-oriented approach. Therefore,

platforms also provide a window into the image and self-image of the political party and their campaign strategy.

Platform Drafters

There are a multitude of different actors that are involved in drafting platforms; however, the most influential voice in drafting is the party leader. The leader sets out the direction for the entire party and election campaign. Therefore, the leader's input impacts the ideological direction as well as the specific elements or policies within a plan. Maisel (1993: 697) argues that, in the American context, platforms are not party documents, but instead presidential candidate centered documents. Flanagan (2009: 137) asserts that, in Canada, the leader's impact is so vital that much of the campaign preparation depends on him or her, including the platform, campaign slogan, and advertisements. For example, he argues that had Belinda Stronach won the Conservative leadership race in 2004, the Conservative party platform for the 2006 election would have been very different. Eddie Goldenberg (2006: 133), who was a senior political advisor to former Prime Minister Chrétien, explains how Chrétien insisted on both his philosophical direction as well as specific elements to be included in the Liberal Party's 1997 election platform. Ideologically, Chrétien wanted to implement a balanced and moderate approach. In terms of specific policy elements, he decided to commit half of any future government surpluses to social and economic priorities, and the other half to debt and tax reduction. As one of Chrétien's top advisors, Chrétien called upon Goldenberg to inform the Minister of Finance and the Liberal Party Platform Committee of this decision. Further, and as an example of the influence and impact of the party leader, Chrétien declared that this decision was "not open for debate" (133). Leaders can also exert their influence on more minor commitments in a platform. Flanagan (2009: 281) explains that leader Stephen Harper had required the 2005-2006 Conservative platform to include measures such as reduced landing fees for immigrants and better recognition for immigrants' credentials, as well as an apology for the Chinese head tax.

The party leader's influence extends beyond the content of the platform; they also appoint the author of the platform and determine the drafting process. Though the leader may insist on an ideological direction or specific elements, it is uncommon for leaders to hold the pen

on the platform itself. Instead, the leader handpicks the platform's drafter. Often, this person (or team of people) is a top partisan advisor to the leader (Craft 2016: 131-132; Cross 2004: 36; Esselment 2017: 231; Savoie 2003: 173). These advisors may work in the leader's office as senior policy analysts or Chiefs of Staff. They may also have previously worked as political staff, but have left for the private sector, only to assist in drafting for the election. Flanagan (2009: 154) explains how in 2004, Harper worked with Ken Boessenkool, a senior policy advisor in the Opposition Leader's Office (OLO), on the campaign platform. Boessenkool, as the main draftsman, was assisted by other senior policy advisors in the OLO such as Mark Cameron, who actually drafted the detailed plans when Boessenkool was pulled to help plan the Leader's Tour.

Advisors may also be asked to draft specific elements of a platform due to their expertise. For example, Conservative leader Stephen Harper had asked Mark Cameron to draft an ethics-reform package in order to capitalize on the Liberals ethical scandals for the Conservatives 2006 platform. Cameron was asked specifically to draft this set of proposals as he had "witnessed Liberal abuses close up" (Martin 2010). Cameron then collaborated with Duff Conacher of Democracy Watch to recommend over fifty reform proposals, of which the majority were included in Harper's accountability platform. Despite the significant influence of advisors in drafting a party's platform, they still report to the leader, who gets final approval of a platform and its contents.

A third set of important actors in the process of drafting platforms is pollsters and public relations professionals (Savoie 2003: 173). As campaigns have become more professionalized and assumed a political marketing orientation, public opinion research has had an increasingly important role in influencing the composition of a political platform. In fact, parties are paying millions of dollars to pollsters and public relations firms for their expertise in drafting platform rhetoric (Ryan 2015: 197). Pollsters help parties decide which issues to highlight in a campaign, and the most effective way to present these issues (Clarke et al. 2001: 400). Flanagan (2014: 80) argues that research from pollsters is important as even party strategists must be cautious not to trust their own instincts and intuitions, since their views and knowledge may not match that of target voter groups.

Caucus members and cabinet can also contribute to drafting the party's platform (Esselment 2017: 231), though this role may be limited. Flynn (2011: 242-243) found that the

Liberals' 2000 platform was partially built on proposals from and consultations with caucus and cabinet. Prior to the 2006 election, Conservative caucus members were able to provide input into the proposals that were being put forward to convention delegates through policy development meetings (Flynn 2011: 244). This was the same case for the federal Progressive Conservatives in 1984, when leader Brian Mulroney asked caucus members to bring forward policy recommendations (ibid). Caucus members may also draft specific elements of the platform. Brodie (2018: 56) wrote that Vic Toews, a Conservative caucus member and the party's justice critic, had drafted the criminal justice section of the Conservative's 2006 platform.

Despite the ability of some caucus and cabinet members to influence the party's platform, local candidates are usually not involved in drafting (Savoie 2013: 173). The election may be won at the individual riding level, but the campaign is designed and executed at the national (or provincial) level. Local candidates are expected to run on and support the party's platform (Flanagan 2014: 31); in most parties, candidates are prohibited from running on their own platforms and policies. Instead of creating policy positions, a candidate's role is to door knock and meet local voters. However, there may be exceptions to this, if the candidate is a knowledgeable policy or regional expert. For example, Conservative candidate Lawrence Cannon drafted the Conservative's Quebec platform (Brodie 2018: 57). Cannon had previously served as a provincial minister, and also had experience in municipal politics and in the private sector. A local candidate and their campaign team may also decide how much emphasis to place on highlighting the party's platform, the candidate, and, potentially, campaigning on local policy issues; however, policy positions do not vary greatly with the local candidate, and their main job is to meet local voters, not invent policy stances.

The public service also provides input into the policies contained in platforms. Due to their non-partisan nature, the public service cannot directly contribute to or write political parties' platforms. However, parties have still been able to benefit from the expertise of the bureaucracy if they are the incumbent government. First, incumbents can use policies from previously drafted material such as Speeches from the Throne and budgets. Both of these texts would have received input from the bureaucracy (Marland and Wesley 2019: 35). Norquay (2013: 8) highlights this, stating that when there is notice that a new Throne Speech is being developed, the "ideas flow in to the centre" from government departments; each department wants to have their issues brought to the forefront. Throne Speeches are not just used to

introduce a new session of Parliament – they are also used to bring about more media attention or to rejuvenate a longer-serving government. Because of this, governments may introduce a new Speech from the Throne closer to an election, and, therefore, borrow policies contained within this document. In studying the platform development process of winning federal parties, Flynn (2011: 242-243) concluded that incumbent parties had used public service advice in their platform drafting process. He found that this input occurred through the public service advising cabinet and the PMO in the process of governing, as well as in budget preparations. Lagassé (2017: 176) argues this point as well, stating that in 2015, due to the fixed election date in October, the governing party was able to view the Spring 2015 budget as a campaign platform. However, Jeffrey (2010: 346) maintains that the public service is not always available to provide advice to governing parties. She argues that the bureaucracy “shuts down” before an election is called, as they do not want to provide detailed information that may end up being part of a campaign. Therefore, she notes that public service advice is only helpful to parties that have had enough time before an election to prepare.

On the other hand, opposition parties do not have access to the expertise of the public service in drafting their platforms. While Flynn (2011: 237) found that incumbent parties received the benefit of bureaucratic advice, the three winning federal parties that were previously in opposition did not have this opportunity. Instead, opposition parties can only rely on regular government documents and reports, or the advice of former bureaucrats. Recently, though, the federal non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) launched a new service to estimate the financial cost of campaign commitments. All parties, including those in opposition, can opt-in to this service.

The influence of the party membership in drafting platforms is mixed. Flynn and Marlin (2018: 259-260) argue that with the increase in professionalism and the decline of mass memberships in political parties, the influence for party members is also decreasing. However, some parties in some elections have provided supporters with the opportunity to provide input into the party’s commitments, dependent on election timing and leadership styles. Parties may invite local ridings, regional associations, or special groups such as the party’s youth wing to submit proposals (ibid). These proposals may be vetted by party officials and debated at policy conferences or conventions. Although it is not a guarantee that grassroots policies approved at such conferences will be included in the campaign platform, there are historical examples of a

more ground-up platform development process. The federal Liberal platform in 1988 emerged from lengthy consultations including conferences, conventions, and the narrowing down of over 300 resolutions (Jeffrey 2010: 134). The federal New Democrats have historically had extensive membership involvement in the development of their platform. Traditionally, the platform development process began with resolutions passed by the party's membership at biannual conventions (McGrane 2019: 60). However, even the NDP's process is moving away from volunteers towards a more professionalized and centralized process involving the leader, their top advisors, and market research. Interestingly, surveys have shown that party members want greater involvement in developing their party's platform (Cross 2004: 28). While the process of developing platform policies is becoming more centralized, recent technological developments have allowed for insights on supporters' favoured policies. For example, in 2015 the Liberals were able to get direct, ongoing feedback on key platform issues through the "myPlatform" app, which allowed users to select policies from over 100 options (Ryan 2019: 110). While other parties have yet to use a similar app, they have relied on data from website traffic and social media to measure similar information (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 130)

Finally, stakeholders like interest groups and NGOs can exert influence over a party's platform. Groups may spend considerable resources and time to influence and gain platform promises on their causes from leaders and parties (Pross 1992: 172). Victor and Reinhardt (2018) found that, in the American context, groups are able to influence platforms and have their issues included under certain conditions, including if groups and parties are ideologically similar and if groups have exhibited loyalty to the party. Including policies that originate in interest groups can also be beneficial to parties since they can gain more votes. Meisel and Mendelsohn (2001: 165) found that free trade was not a policy initiative that originated in the Progressive Conservative party; instead, it was drawn from the corporate community. They argue that outside organizations are responsible for introducing many of the most important policy developments that occurred in Canada in the last twenty years. Other examples cited by Meisel and Mendelsohn include the Goods and Services Tax (GST), an idea drafted by conservative think tanks as well as within the bureaucracy. Parties may also actively seek out the advice of outside organizations. The expertise of NGOs is especially important for parties in opposition, who do not have the expertise of the bureaucracy to rely on in drafting their platforms (Martin 2008: 102).

Some parties engage these stakeholders and experts in a pre-election “thinker’s conference”. This involves policy experts such as academics and practitioners presenting proposals and providing policy feedback to parties. The Liberal Party has held many thinker’s conferences including in Port Hope in 1933, Kingston in 1960, Harrison Hot Springs in 1969, and Aylmer in 1991. If party members are in attendance, it allows them to learn about and discuss leading and innovative research (Esselment 2015: 183).

Platform Content

A platform is both one of the most basic and important communications documents from a political party. The platform echoes the party’s overall brand and strategy for the campaign by using the same themes and narratives. The importance of using the right rhetoric and imagery in the platform cannot be overstated, and the party’s communication team will help support the platform drafters in achieving this objective (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 129; Yates and Chenery 2020: 148). The language within the platform has also been tested by market research (Esselment 2015: 179) to ensure it resonates with targeted voters and stakeholders.

Modern platforms, though varied, outline the commitments of a party, coupling ideology and concrete policy proposals. Prior stances taken by the party act as the foundation for the content of a new platform (Flynn 2011: 242-243; Wesley and Nauta 2020: 127). A party may use a similar style and theme in the new platform as in the previous one, showcasing their track record on previous commitments. This strategy was used by the Ontario Liberal Party during the 2003 and 2007 elections. The party used headings such as “Change that’s working”, “Over and above”, and “Change in progress” to showcase their actions on each promise. The two platforms also contained very similar planks arranged in a similar order.

Scholars have disagreed whether current-day platforms are vague (Savoie 2003: 173-174) or detailed (Flynn 2011: 237). Nonetheless, both vagueness and specificity have their benefits and disadvantages. Goldenberg (2006: 47-48) outlines the difficulties and risks of producing a more detailed platform, as the Liberals did with the ‘Red Book’ in 1993. First, it is more difficult to implement a detailed platform. Political, social, and economic environments can change, making previous promises unworkable, unpopular, or unnecessary. Thus, parties may need to shift their commitments or recalibrate the policy instruments they select. Second, Goldenberg

outlines the specific difficulties for opposition parties that develop a more detailed platform. Because they are not privy to the insights from the public service, some commitments may be unattainable due to budget surprises and constraints (Esselment 2015: 182). Finally, a detailed platform leaves a party more vulnerable to breaking promises that were unworkable even in the climate that they were made (but made regardless). Instead of detail, ambiguity in these cases may leave more space to shift policies so as they do not appear to be broken by the party. This risk was a consideration for Chrétien in approving ideas for the Red Book. His successor, Paul Martin (2008: 98-99), recalls how Chrétien would resist more ambitious or detailed ideas to avoid the pitfalls of these types of promises.

The content of the platform is an important strategic decision for a party. Not only does the platform outline the party's plan for governance, it is used as a product to target specific groups of voters, differentiate from competitors, address traditional vulnerabilities, and to capitalize on other parties' weaknesses. Naturally, the platform will include promises that please a party's core supporters, also called the "red meat" items (Flanagan 2014: 81). For example, the Conservatives 2006 platform included several commitments of broad tax cuts, a promise aligned with the views of the Conservatives' small-government base. As an example from the other side of the spectrum, the Ontario NDP included a commitment to public auto insurance in their 1990 election platform (Cross et. al 2015: 45).

However, parties are increasingly placing more importance on the average Canadians' views instead of the demands of core party supporters (Esselment 2015: 184). Though a party will have their ideal policy commitments in mind, those policies may need to be reworked to appeal to the mainstream voter. Flanagan (2009: 223) explains how the Conservatives were informed by the desire to appeal to "ordinary people" when drafting their 2006 platform. This also led party strategist Patrick Muttart to construct the Conservative's "voter universe" (Esselment 2015: 184), a coalition of those who already support or are likely to support their party.

Polling and market research play a major role in determining the content aimed at groups of accessible voters. This shift towards a market-oriented approach is exemplified by the NDP after the 2004 election (Wesley and Moyes 2014). The party increased their use of polling and focus groups to inform the content of their platforms, allowing them to be more aligned with

targeted voters (McGrane 2019: 60-61). This resulted in policies in the NDP's platform that were very similar to the Liberals. By using market research, the NDP were able to determine their target voters - soft Liberal supporters - and designed the contents of their platform to appeal to this group. Esselment (2015: 185) notes how the overall shift for parties toward a market-oriented approach means that parties are looking at polling and research to see what voters in their universe want even *before* they develop their policies, a change from the sales-oriented practice of deciding policies first and finding target groups second.

Parties also use the content of platforms to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In other words, platforms are a key means for parties to reinforce issue ownership (McGrane 2019: 182; Ryan 2015: 197; Wesley and Nauta 2020: 124). While a significant portion of the content is dedicated to valence issues, or issues where there is broad public consensus and thus little differentiation amongst parties (such as support for health care) (Cross et. al 2015: 45), parties will also look to focus on issues where they are viewed more favourably compared to their competitors. Typically, voters believe left-leaning parties are more capable of handling social issues, while right-leaning parties are more capable of handling the economy. By highlighting the issues that are more favourable to them, parties hope their issues are talked about more often, and the electorate will vote with this in mind. This premise is the foundation of the issue ownership theory of voting (Budge & Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1989), though the perceived salience of the issue is also important (Bélanger and Meguid 2005).

A party may also dedicate space in their platform to address a traditional weakness. By directly confronting one's own perceived weakness(es), strategists hope that voters feel a reduced risk in choosing their party. This process is known as inoculation (Wesley and Moyes 2014: 77). The Manitoba NDP used this strategy in the late 1990s, when leader Gary Doer and his strategists committed to balanced budget legislation (*ibid*), a shift away from their typical stance of counter-cyclical spending. Parties will also use market research to inform these decisions (McGrane 2019).

Not only are platforms used to inoculate against a party's own weaknesses, they also provide an opportunity to capitalize on opposing parties' weaknesses. For example, the first plank for the 2006 federal Conservative platform was titled "Stand up for Accountability", providing a direct contrast to the critique of Liberal corruption (Flanagan 2009: 157). Strategists

will use this to remind voters of the risks in electing their competition, while also presenting an alternative to voters.

While the content of a platform speaks to what a party and leader will do if elected, what is not said in the platform is also significant. Parties may choose to omit certain elements if they do not cater to their target voters, or if the commitments are too extreme for a party trying to moderate their policies or brand. This was the case for the federal Conservatives during the 2004 election, whose platform purposefully did not address bilingualism, multiculturalism, abortion, and capital punishment (ibid: 156). This was done to reassure voters that some of the more controversial issues, such as those desired by social conservatives within the Conservative party, would not be part of the Conservative's mandate (Esselment 2015: 188-189). Their absence raised questions of whether the party harboured a hidden agenda, however, highlighting the risks involved in drafting a platform that fails to cover the entire issue landscape.

The content of a platform also needs to bring together different groups within a party. Parties on both the left and right side of the spectrum are made up of different factions. National and provincial parties can also be divided along generational, regional, and ethnic lines. The party's platform thus typically represents compromises among these groups (Vassallo and Wilcox 2006: 416; Walters 1990: 437-438; Welsey and Nauta 2020: 133). For example, a Conservative caucus committee had prepared a report "highlighting the common ground between the two predecessor parties [the Alliance and Progressive Conservatives]" (Flanagan 2009: 138). This report helped inform the preliminary work of Ken Boessenkool, the Conservative's platform drafter.

Parties and platform drafters may face limitations when drafting platforms. It is common for parties to provide a realistic costing of their commitments, which limits the policies that can be advanced and provides a natural check on the platform (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 127). Past documents, such as the party's previous election platform, leadership campaign commitments, and policy manuals and declarations must also be considered. However, research by Flynn (2011: 245) challenges the argument that parties face limitations. He concluded that there are very few constraints on the policies that parties can advance in their platforms, with the exception being the status of the budget. In assessing winning federal parties from 1984 to 2008,

budget deficits were correlated with spending constraints in platforms, whereas budget surpluses correlated with less constraints and a wider breadth of policy choices.

Platform Release (And Leaks)

The platform release is an important event for a party. Parties or riding associations may even host platform release parties, as some Liberal associations did during the 2011 federal election campaign (Marland 2011: 177). Prior to evolutions in mass communication, parties would display their campaign literature around neighbourhood gathering spots or in newspapers (Esselment 2015: 180). Developments in printing and communications have allowed parties to print and distribute platforms in large quantities (Flanagan 2014: 81).

For example, in the federal election of 2004, the NDP printed two thousand copies of their platform and provided it to candidates, riding campaign managers, and the media (Whitehorn 2004: 117). In today's contemporary political system, access to political platforms is digital. Parties do not print and distribute platforms in large quantities; instead, platforms are posted on the party's website (Flanagan 2014: 81). The party's website may even be redesigned prior to the campaign to reflect new branding and logos, and to make campaign material more easily accessible to users. This was the case for the Ontario Liberal Party in advance of the 2011 provincial election. Cross et al. (2015: 85) found that the party redesigned the Ontario Liberal website, ensuring the homepage featured flipping images and links to campaign content such as the platform and candidates. Parties, leaders, and candidates are also utilizing social media to link to their platforms (ibid: 93, Yates and Chenery 2020: 152).

Unveiling a platform is an important strategic consideration for a party. Historically, some parties released their platforms months in advance of the election, such as the aforementioned Ontario PCs Common Sense Revolution and the federal NDP in 2018/19. More commonly, though, platforms are released closer to the election. For instance, the 1993 Red Book was released in the second week of the campaign. Release dates within the window of the campaign can vary, and there are benefits and disadvantages to each time frame. First, an earlier release date shows a party that is organized, and also demonstrates a sense of confidence and openness (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 130). Parties are able to show to voters that they have comprehensive policies and are ready to govern (Clarkson 2005: 142-143). Esselment (2015:

186) argues that releasing platform planks early can be a smart strategic move by opposition parties. Specifically, this can be done to allow voters to familiarize themselves with a party that may not get as much media attention as the governing party. Finally, it provides local candidates with sufficient time to prepare their campaign materials and talking points (Clarkson 2005: 142-143).

However, there are numerous drawbacks to an earlier platform release. Parties that announce their platform planks early are vulnerable to other parties stealing an idea or countering with their own proposals. For example, the Alberta Liberal Party in 1992 released an aggressive cut and slash platform that was then co-opted by the Progressive Conservative Party under leader Ralph Klein (Brooks 2000: 271). Secondly, parties are susceptible to prolonged scrutiny, as the earlier release date provides more time for reporters and critics to dissect each platform plank. A party that has not sufficiently prepared or rushed a platform plank without working out the details can be especially vulnerable.

Due to these reasons, a party may decide to release their platform later in a campaign cycle. A later release date allows a party to adapt to issues that may develop over the course of the campaign. Parties can also evaluate the popularity of their commitments, making edits as needed (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 130). Esselment (2015: 187) found that incumbents, more than opposition parties, tend to release their platforms later in the campaign. Incumbent parties do not suffer from a lack of media exposure, and typically voters are more aware of the party and leader. However, parties can be criticized for releasing their platform too late. While an early release date communicates openness, a later date can be criticized for being unaccountable or concealing a hidden agenda. Voters, reporters, or other parties can also charge that a later date does not allow for proper scrutiny of the parties' policy commitments. Despite these drawbacks, Wesley and Nauta (2020: 131) argue there is little to no evidence that voters punish parties for unveiling their platform late.

Choosing to unveil a platform and all platform planks at once can also negatively affect a campaign. Whereas incrementally releasing planks provides daily media coverage, the party is likely to get less coverage with an all-out release - soon after the release, the full platform will become old news. Further, it is unlikely that the media coverage of the full platform release has highlighted all the important planks. Clarkson (2005: 142-143) summarized this problem for the

Liberals and leader John Turner in 1984. While Turner may have felt the full unveiling provided voters with a comprehensive set of policies, the media were not able to handle such a large amount of information that was not centered around a simple theme. Further, the media were not able to present more than a single idea in their thirty-second television clips, leading to a range of issues not receiving airtime.

For this reason, many parties present their planks incrementally in the lead-up to a full platform release. The campaign team will often draft a schedule of daily policy announcements in co-ordination with the leader's tour, allowing for advanced preparation and planning (Jeffrey 2010: 137). This strategy was used by the 1974 Liberal campaign, so each policy announcement would gain maximum positive media coverage (Taras 1996: 430-431).

Despite a great deal of planning and co-ordination, leaks can derail a platform release or even the party's broader campaign. Platform leaks may force a party to unveil their platform earlier than intended and/or disrupt the momentum of daily policy releases. Leaks also leave parties vulnerable to criticisms and scrutiny before the platform may be fully ready (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 124). If a rival party comes into possession of another party's platform before its planned release date, the party may steal a rival's ideas. Such a situation occurred in Newfoundland in the 1960s. The Progressive Conservatives came into possession of the Liberal platform by fluke prior to its unveiling. The PCs were then able to commit to many of the items in the Liberal platform, leaving the Liberals with an equivalent and second-rate platform (Boyer 2015: 198-199).

Because of these risks, parties take extra precautions to keep platforms confidential prior to their release. For example, the federal Conservatives were hesitant to submit their 2019 platform to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who was providing nonpartisan platform cost estimates to each party that requested it. However, after reassurances from the PBO that the platform would be kept confidential and not leaked, they agreed (Curry and Carbert 2019). Despite precautions, platform leaks do still happen in contemporary Canadian politics. The federal Conservatives experienced this in the 2004 campaign, when their platform was leaked three weeks prior to the parties' scheduled release (Ellis and Woolstencroft 2004: 104). To highlight the gravity of leaks, the Conservative platform drafter at this time, Boessenkool, had even offered his resignation following the incident (Flanagan 2009: 155).

The Platform's Impact

An idealized description of elections argues that they center around competing visions and policy ideas for a state. Documents such as platforms provide parties with the opportunity to present these competing visions and for voters to decide among them. However, there are a multitude of factors affecting an individuals' vote choice, such as parties, leaders, issues, and candidates, and the importance of these factors vary among voters.

Downs (1957) argues that vote choice can be explained through economic reasoning; namely, that people will vote for the party they believe will provide them with the most benefits, and that they will vote for the party that is closest to them in terms of ideology and policy preferences. In other words, gaining the highest utility will motivate the rational voter. The voter must therefore compare the benefits they would gain if each party were in office. Diverging somewhat from Downs, Petrocik (1996: 825) offers a theory of issue ownership to explain vote choice. He theorizes that voter preferences are influenced less by ideology and policy positions and more by the candidate and party's reputation for competence on handling the issues that voters are concerned about. Voters cast ballots for people and parties that match with their priorities. Further, the sources of issue ownership are based on the *record of the incumbent* and the *constituencies of the parties*. Anderson and Stephenson (2010: 2) compare individual vote choice to a complex puzzle: "Each vote decision is a composite of several factors that explain how and why the person votes the way that he or she does." For example, they classify partisanship, economic conditions, and campaign effects as factors that shape voting decisions. A fourth approach is the bloc recursive model developed by Blais et al. (2002), which outlines the stages or blocs of variables affecting a voters' decision. This model includes socio-demographic characteristics, underlying beliefs and values, party identification, economic perceptions, issue opinions, evaluation of government performance, leader evaluations, and strategic considerations.

While some argue that issues do matter in Canadian voting (Anderson and Stephenson 2010: 22; Blais et al. 2002; Gidengil et al. 2006), assessing the impact of platforms is difficult (Esselment 2015: 188), as voters may use other criteria to inform their vote. Bittner (2011) emphasizes that voters may use 'symbolic' factors such as evaluations of party leaders instead of 'higher' factors such as platforms. As well, issue opinions are only one stage in models of vote

choice. However, studies that ask respondents what influences their vote can also provide some insight. For example, the 2011 and 2015 Canadian Election Studies (CES) asked respondents their reasons for vote choice. In both years, policy was the most common answer, at 26% and 32% respectively, while approximately 1 in 5 respondents answered *negative* reasons (such as voting *against* something or a *dislike* of other parties), and 19% selected party leaders (Clarke et al. 2019: 60).

Despite conflicting views within academia on issue voting and the platform's influence on vote choice, political actors use platforms as a multipurpose tool both during and beyond the campaign. According to Flanagan (2014: 81), the campaign strategist views the platform and its policies as a "means to achieve the end of winning the election".

First, platforms are important for elections as they act as a foundation that supports other election communications. The content of a platform guides all other election communication including advertising, speeches, and press releases (Flanagan 2014: 81), as well as the leader's tour schedule (Flanagan 2009: 210). In other words, the platform acts as a central thread (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 125). Platforms are also essential for local candidates, as it provides them with a base of issues to campaign on (Walters 1990: 438).

A platform can also be a shield for a party leader. This type of strategy was used by the Liberals in 1993. Their leader, Chrétien, faced criticisms that he had little interest or grasp of policy issues (Taras 1996: 430-431) and that he was not seen as a "policy man" (Jeffrey 2010: 208). However, the Red Book, as well as the Aylmer Conference in advance of the Red Book, were meant to counter these critiques. Savoie (2003: 200) argued that the Liberal strategists used the Red Book as a way to divert negative press from Chrétien and his alleged inability to articulate new ideas and a vision for Canada. Leaders can also refer the media back to the platform during the election. Jean Chrétien used this strategy in 1993, when he referred media to the party's detailed platform when asked a difficult or detailed policy question in the campaign (Cross et al. 2015: 44-45; Esselment 2015: 181).

The platform content and development process also influences party members. While the party relies on the votes of the party membership, they also count on members to donate money and volunteer on campaigns during an election. Thus, a platform is seen as a way to excite and mobilize activists and the party membership (Ryan 2015: 194-195) by including policies meant

to energize the party's base (Cross et al. 2015: 45). However, demoralizing the membership can have the opposite effect. The federal Liberals experienced this in the 1970s. Hundreds of volunteers had committed time and energy to developing a policy platform for their party, but the party had not adopted these commitments for their 1972 platform. This caused the party membership's morale to drop considerably, and, in a survey of active Liberals in Ontario, respondents said it was much harder to recruit volunteers for the 1972 election compared to the 1968 campaign (Clarkson 1979).

Beyond its effects on individual attitudes and behaviour, the content within the winning party's platform signals the policy priorities for the incoming government (Marland and Wesley 2019: 33-34). To make their way into the formal government agenda, some commitments within a platform are articulated through government documents such as Throne Speeches and budget speeches (ibid). This is also called the "translation" phase, where campaign commitments are converted to concrete policy measures (Craft 2016: 138). Interviewed partisan advisors have also confirmed the platform informs ministerial mandate letters, stating that the process of drafting mandate letters is a basic division of the platform by portfolio (Craft 2016: 138). Mike McNair, the former executive director in the Prime Minister's office, demonstrated this link when he tweeted "the warm reception to Minister mandate letters is another demonstration of the great job @RalphGoodale and @MonaFortier did in their LPC platform leadership. Post-election Canadians have a second opportunity to engage with the ideas" (McNair 2019). Thirdly, platform commitments can inform the government's budget. For instance, Brodie (2018: 29) acknowledged that the costing of the federal Conservative's 2006 platform provided the foundation for their first budget. Finally, platforms do not only inform official government documents, but also provide ongoing operational guidance. In interviews with partisan advisors, Craft (2016: 148) found that the role of political advisors such as a minister's chief of staff is to ensure that departmental policy files going to a minister include memos outlining the political context on a file, including how the issue fits within the party's past electoral platform. However, despite this evidence that platform commitments inform a government's policy priorities, there has been little analysis and academic research conducted on the electoral platform as an agenda-setting document (Ryan 2015).

Given its centrality to the government's agenda, the content of a party platform also affects the work of the public service. Though the platform is developed mostly by partisans,

determining the policy and program specifics, as well as implementing the platform's commitments, is accomplished by the non-partisan bureaucracy. For this reason, public servants will read the platforms of the major parties in order to prepare for a new government, scrutinizing commitments to understand their priorities (Turnbull and Booth 2020: 63). Officials may also provide analysis of a platform to senior management during an election. For example, in the 2019 Alberta election, public servants across government were tasked with providing detailed policy analysis of the platforms of the top four political parties. Given the surprise election of the NDP in 2015, the bureaucracy did not want to be caught flat-footed and unprepared for a change in government. Finally, platforms can even affect the organization of the bureaucracy structure. The platform determines the agenda, and thus the important files for government. If these areas differ from previous governments, it may result in restructuring.

Chapter 2: Toward Explaining Policy Change

Two main research questions were generated to analyze variations in provincial platforms, which cover both longitudinal and cross-sectional variables:

- Why do parties change policy priorities and emphasis over time?
- What explains differences among Canadian provincial parties' priorities and emphasis?

Changes over time

Seminal research on party policy change is mainly attributed to research by Budge (1994) as well as by Harmel and Janda (1994). In studying how parties decide on policy without reliable information on the effects of their decisions on voting, Budge (1994: 461) developed five models for party policy decision making:

1. The *Stay Put Model*, which is based on the idea that parties operate and must decide on positions under uncertainty; therefore, parties endorse roughly the same priorities from election to election.
2. The *Alternation Model*, which describes how parties change priorities in different directions between elections, similar to a 'zig-zag' pattern.
3. The *Past Results Model*, which argues that parties evaluate their policies based on whether a previous left or right shift resulted in vote gains or losses. This leads to parties that stay where they are if their move was associated with gains and change direction if it resulted in losses.
4. *Robertson's Rational Expectations Model*, which explains how parties adjust their behaviour relative to if they think the next election will be competitive or non-competitive. If they think it will be competitive, they will move to the center; if they do not think it will be competitive, they will move towards their left/ right extreme.
5. The *Marker Party Model*, which is based on the premise that parties shift their positions to distance themselves from neighbouring rival parties.

Harmel and Janda's (1994) work suggests that change is generated by internal factors, such as leadership change or a change of the dominant faction within a party, and/or by external stimuli such as a party's poor electoral performance.

There are an increasing number of more recent studies covering how, when, and why political parties adapt and change policy positions. In his review of the literature on parties' positional changes, Fagerholm (2016) identifies seven different causal factors that may influence shifts, some of which are also raised by Budge and Hamel and Janda: change in party leadership; change of dominant faction; intra-party structure; previous electoral performance; previous shifts by rival parties; government or opposition status; and previous shift in public opinion.

First, Fagerholm's review of the literature on change in party leadership motivating party policy change found that there is no convincing evidence that parties' policy change is caused by a change in party leader. Similarly, Fagerholm also found no strong empirical evidence in the literature supporting the expectation that parties shift policies as a result of a change in the dominant faction. However, there was strong support for the theory that intra-party structure matters when parties change their position. Evidence from the literature also supported the conclusion that parties may respond to past (national) election results, at least if the election was recent and resulted in a significant loss. Similarly, Fagerholm also found support for the fifth causal factor, as he concluded that the literature presents some support that parties distance themselves from other parties through positional shifts. In looking at governing status, research from the literature suggested that opposition parties were less likely to shift their policy positions if they had strong organizations/ are policy-seeking parties. Finally, Fagerholm found evidence in the literature supporting the theory that shifts in public opinion influence mainstream parties to change their policy positions.

Differences among provincial parties: region/ province and party family

Provincial parties in Canada vary across two main dimensions: they are part of their own subnational "world", or provincial political community, with varying demographic, historical, and economic make-ups; and they are also typically associated (to different degrees) with a "party family" – parties of the same name federally and/or provincially.

First, we would expect parties to differ because they exist and compete in different "worlds". This concept was popularized by Elkins and Simeon (1980), who explored the many dimensions of regionalism in Canada with their influential book *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. Their conclusion that there is no "one Canada" but instead ten unique political communities informs the theoretical expectations and foundations for this thesis;

namely, that provincial parties' policy priorities and emphasis are expected to differ across the country. Since the 1980s, various Canadian scholars have published on provincial and regional politics (Atkinson et al. 2013; Brownsey & Howlett 2001; Dunn 1996, 2006 and 2016; Dyck 1991; Tomblin 1995; Wesley 2016; Young & Archer 2002) and the understanding of Canada as a regionalized¹ country is well-established (Elkins & Simeon 1980: x).

Provinces and regions in Canada can vary based on: cultural, historic, ethnic, and demographic factors; economic structures; and “differences in need”, a term used by Simeon and Miller (1980: 280-281) to describe proportions of those in need of government intervention, such as the proportions of those living in poverty, proportion of school age children, and so on. For example, Alberta's economy is rooted in resource revenues (Sayers and Stewart 2016: 166) while manufacturing remains an important sector in Ontario's economy (Anderson 2016: 106). These variations are expected to influence policy preferences and priorities. For instance, Atlantic Canadians have been described as “among the most left-leaning Canadians by some measures” (Wesley 2016: 207).

As explained by Stewart, Sayers, and Carty (2016: 137), the “character of relations between federal and provincial parties in Canada is highlight varied”. Specifically, the level of organizational integration among parties of the same name varies across federal and provincial divides. Parties can even be classified based on their level of connection with their “party family”. According to Dyck (1991), integrated parties are classified by teamwork, ideological similarities, and the sharing of resources between federal and provincial parties. In Canada, the New Democratic Party is a fully integrated organization; an individual who joins the provincial NDP automatically has a membership in the federal party (Esselment 2010: 872). Federal-provincial organization within the Liberal Party can be found in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Links between Liberal parties at the federal level and in the remaining provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec) are more informal, relying mainly on sharing party activists (ibid). There are no direct organizational connections between the federal Conservative party and provincial PC parties (Esselment 2010: 872; Stewart et al. 2016: 137). For instance, the Conservative party's Constitution does not contain any measures of an integrated structure, although party members may volunteer on both federal and provincial campaigns. This type of party is labelled

¹ However Canadian political scientists are not in agreement regarding a set definition of regionalism.

as a confederal or split party. In Canada, there are also truncated parties, which are defined as a federal or provincial political party that does not have a similarly named party at the other level of government (Marland and Wesley 2020:307). For example, the Saskatchewan Party, United Conservative Party, and Wildrose party are (or were) truncated parties.

Differences in party linkages are expected to influence the prioritization levels and emphasis in policy areas. For example, it is assumed that parties that are integrated may create platforms that are more similar to each other compared to parties with less integration. One reason for this is that integrated parties share activists. Political staffers may volunteer for their party cousin during an election, and party professionals will move between different campaigns to provide expertise in areas such as writing a platform. Esselment (2010: 879) highlights this experience in her research on cross-level political party integration: “In those provinces where parties are particularly close or even integrated, counterparts may work together on an election platform. In these cases there will often be similarities in the campaign documents, if not in substance then certainly in style”.

Both of the aforementioned dimensions can influence provincial parties’ policy prioritization and issue emphasis. However, these two measures are also at odds with one another. The theory of regionalism would suggest that there is no one political party family across Canada, while our understanding of integrated party families would suggest that the influence of province or region is not as powerful as partisan ties. Ultimately, both theories can help explain shifts in policy, and will be analyzed in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

While the importance of platforms has already been established, the methods and frameworks for evaluating Canadian political platforms has not. Studies on political platforms measure rhetoric (Wesley 2011), campaign strategies (Flanagan 2014), and ideological positioning (McGrane 2019). This thesis, instead, is motivated by policy priority and emphasis. Specifically, what policy priorities do parties set out in their platforms, how and why do these change over time, and how and why do they differ from province to province? In order to answer these questions, the following independent variables were analyzed: time, party family, and jurisdiction. In terms of a party's positions over time, it is hypothesized that market-oriented parties will be more likely to shift policies. Conversely, product- and sales-oriented parties are expected to be more consistent (Lees-Marshment 2001). In terms of a party's alignment with counterparts in the rest of Canada, it is hypothesized that party families with stronger party linkages (i.e., integrated parties) are more likely to have similar policy priorities than those with weaker or no organizational ties (i.e., split or truncated parties).

The findings presented in this paper are based on a content analysis of major parties' platform section headlines and titles (i.e. chapters) in most Canadian provincial elections from 2003 to 2019. Specifically, this project involved analyzing the platform sections of the major parties in provincial elections in nine of the following Canadian provinces: Alberta; British Columbia; Manitoba; New Brunswick; Newfoundland and Labrador; Nova Scotia; Ontario; Prince Edward Island; and Saskatchewan. Territories were excluded from this study due to their unique structure and lack of partisan representation. Quebec was excluded due to language constraints.

A major party is defined for the purpose of this paper as one that has held government or official opposition status during the study period. In total, there were 24 different parties across all provinces that met this criteria, including Liberal parties (7), Progressive Conservative parties (7), and New Democratic parties (6), as well as the United Conservative and Wildrose parties in Alberta, the Saskatchewan Party in Saskatchewan, and the Green Party in Prince Edward Island. The study period is defined as a general provincial election held after 2002. I selected this year as the beginning of my study period because it allowed for an analysis of between four and five elections, which was sufficient to be able to track a period of election changes and patterns while

still remaining feasible due to financial and time constraints. Finally, platforms were more easily accessible online from this date onwards.

Choosing this start date resulted in the examination of 43 elections: five election cycles in the majority of the provinces (AB, MB, NB, NL, NS, ON, and PEI), and four election cycles in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Due to the absence of platforms, by-elections were not included in this study.

Canadian provincial parties were selected due to the value of using provinces as a laboratory for social science comparison. Specifically, provinces offer the ideal set of cases for research in comparative policy (Imbeau et al. 2000). Provinces share more similarities than countries do (Wesley 2012: ii), allowing researchers to hold many variables constant in their studies. For instance, all provinces are subnational governments based on the Westminster parliamentary system. They use first-past-the-post electoral systems and rely on export-based and service-based economies. Further, provinces have the same powers under the Constitution. This allows researchers to analyze other factors that contribute to variations (ibid: ii). Ultimately, these constant variables allow for cases that, under examination, are comparable.

While previous scholars have had difficulty in locating Canadian platforms (Irvine 1987, Wesley 2011), beginning the study period in 2003 negated the problem of finding any historical documents. Further, these difficulties were minimized in 2020 by technology, as well as the research and retrieval completed by predecessors. For this project, the majority of platforms were gathered from the Université Laval's archival site, the Poltext Project (www.poltext.org), which provides a collection of political texts including platforms, throne speeches, budget speeches, and AG reports both at the federal and provincial level (territories are also excluded from this database). Any platforms that were unavailable on Poltext's database were then collected from libraries, party leaders, and archived party websites. When a typical platform (i.e. a stand-alone party platform document) was not available, headlines and titles representing policy priorities of the party during the election were determined by section headings and their ordering on the party's archived website, as well as from media releases and the party's schedule of policy announcements during the campaign. If archived versions of platforms or party websites were unavailable, these platforms and election cycles were excluded from this project. The platforms

that were irretrievable include those from the Liberal Party of PEI prior to 2011, and the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI prior to 2015.

Platforms were chosen as the material of study since they are “the only fully authoritative statement of the party policy for an election” (Budge 1994: 455). Platforms provide overviews of party policy ideas, listed by priority area. Using political platforms (or manifestos) as units of measurement is common within the political science discipline. Projects such as the Manifesto Project (also known as MARPOR), which combines the work of the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) and the original Manifesto Research Group (MRG), co-ordinates and publishes content analyses of party platforms (manifestos) in over 50 countries from 1945 until today (Wesley 2011: 253). This project pioneered the use of content analysis of party platforms by assigning codes from a universal codebook to passages of text, also known as quasi-sentences, to determine parties’ ideological and left-right positioning. The contribution of the CMP is significant - the data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (and its successor) is the most popular source for parties’ positions on a left-right dimension (Gemenis 2013).

However, my own research interests are not centered around parties’ left-right positioning; instead, I am motivated to uncover and understand policy prioritization and attention changes. Therefore, this thesis focuses more on the continuity and shifts of policy attention as outlined in parties’ platforms – this research is not a measure of the parties’ left-right positioning. It is for this reason that the methods and codebook from the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) were used. Similar to the CMP, the Comparative Agenda’s Project (CAP) also requires coders to assign codes from a single, universal, and consistent coding scheme to sections of texts; the Master CAP Codebook uses 21 major topics and over 200 subtopics to code policy. However, instead of coding left-right positions, the CAP focuses on the allocation of *attention* to issues (Baumgartner, Breunig, and Grossman 2019). In other words, the CAP methods reinforce the importance of measuring the *attention* placed on policy issues, a fundamental concept in my own research. This motivated my decision to choose the CAP framework and codebook over other methods.

Penner, Blidook and Soroka (2006) brought the CAP to the Canadian context by studying issue attentiveness in the Canadian parliamentary system. Through an adapted US Policy Agendas Project codebook, they measured legislative activity. Specifically, the project focused

on analyzing oral questions asked in the House of Commons to assess whether they reflected public issue priorities. Despite this earlier work, applying the CAP method in Canada is still in its infancy, and the codebook has not yet been operationalized to analyze Canadian provincial platforms.

However, this project deviates from other projects studying platform content as it relies on analyzing section headings or titles in political platforms, and not quasi-sentences. This method is similar to the techniques used by Trimble and Sampert (2004), who incorporate news framing techniques to analyze election-related headlines in news stories. As outlined by Trimble and Sampert (2004: 56), headlines were chosen in their analysis because of their prominence, importance, and ability to summarize the main topic. They also argue that headlines shape the interpretation of a story as they are often the only information readers will recall. I argue the same rationale applies to platform chapter headings. To reiterate, headings were chosen as they are important indicators and summaries of the content of the text, and also shape the readers' interpretation of the information. Ultimately, this also negates the need to conduct a "deep reading" of the platform text.

For this project, chapter headings were gathered from a platform's table of contents where available. If this was not available, decisions were made regarding the chapter headings based on enlarged, bolded, or underlined font, as well as page breaks and header images. When platforms were unavailable for the given election cycle, press releases and titles on archived party websites were used. In total, this resulted in the coding of approximately 770-chapter headings. Headlines from material without a policy or action-based focus, such as preamble and platform costing, were excluded from this study. This is consistent with the coding instructions of the Manifesto Project².

As the first step in the process of textual analysis, an initial examination of a smaller sample of all platforms was conducted to determine the dependent variables of this project. In the first stage, it was revealed that the sampled platforms, on average, were fairly inconsistent, and the priority placed on various areas of policy (i.e. social, economic, resource development, and government operations) varied from election to election. During this stage, it was also evident

² The Manifesto Project also excludes headlines from their coding process as they are focused on the entire text of a party's platform.

that policy areas were also “dropped” from a platform from one election to the next, though it occasionally reappeared in subsequent platforms. These observations motivated the paper’s research question and pushed the unit of observation away from quasi-sentences and toward a quantitative approach to headlines and section titles.

After this first stage, platform section titles (i.e. chapters) and their orders were recorded on a spreadsheet. Chapters were then coded based on the Master Codebook from the CAP. Each chapter title was coded with a major policy area, subtopic policy area, and a numeric subtopic code. For example, if the chapter title in the platform was “Fisheries”, it was coded “Agriculture – Fisheries and Fishing – 408.”

While the CAP Master Codebook is comprehensive and covers the majority of policy topics, limited additional codes (topics and subtopics) were added in order to fully capture Canadian provincial platform topics. This included adding: a primary industry subtopic under the broader macroeconomic topic; a forestry subtopic under the broader agriculture topic; and a broader regional politics topic with subtopics for general and northern regional politics. The full codebook can be found in the appendix of this paper.

Chapters were coded into one and only one policy area. If the chapter fit under multiple subtopic codes within the same larger topic (i.e. it covered a variety of topics under the health umbrella), the general subtopic code was used. If the title fit under multiple subtopic codes from the CAP Master Codebook (i.e. it referred to education AND health), subheadings or platform text below the title was used to determine the first policy area, representing the first priority. Thus, the first subject as a major subheading or point of action in that chapter determined the allocated code.

One of the other main decisions involved how to code chapter titles focusing on *job creation*. This topic presented a special challenge in the coding process as, within the CAP Codebook, the code of *Labour* focuses more on the labour movement, including topics such as worker safety, labour unions, and migrant and seasonal workers, but does not directly address job creation. To mitigate this, I included job creation as a new subtopic under *Labour*. I also ensured that each instance of the topic of job creation was assessed on an individual basis. Specifically, I looked for key words in the chapter title such as “jobs”, “jobs plan”, “creating

jobs”, “putting people to work”. I used this subcode 20 times. These decisions were supported by inter-coder reliability, as discussed below.

After all platform chapter titles were coded, inter-coder reliability testing was conducted to ensure accurateness of my codes. This involved training a university colleague on my coding methods, who then coded a random set of platform chapter headings that I had previously collected. Specifically, my colleague coded every tenth chapter heading of the full set of 700+ chapter headings. To ensure sufficient variation, every tenth chapter heading was selected based on a list of platform chapter titles which were ordered by province and year. After a revision to the codebook instructions, 97% agreement was achieved, results that are well within the desired agreement level of 80 per cent.

Finally, I grouped similar major topics under larger policy umbrellas. This was done to ensure findings were easier to interpret. The seven main policy umbrellas are: economics and business; social; environment; infrastructure; justice and public safety; resource development; and government operations. Seven tables are included below in order to show the differences between policy areas that may initially appear as if they overlap. For example, the codes of environment and energy are differentiated as the environment code is primarily concerned with solid waste disposal and pollutants in the air and water, whereas the energy code focuses on energy supply.

Table 1. Economics and Business Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Economics and business	Macroeconomics (1)	- Interest Rates (101) - Unemployment Rate (103) - Budget (105) - Tax Code (107)
	Domestic Commerce (15)	- Insurance Regulation (1505) - Small Businesses (1521) - Consumer Safety (1525)
	Foreign Trade (18)	- Trade Agreements (1802) - Competitiveness – interprovincial trade (1806)

Table 2. Social Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Social	Health (3)	- Health Care Reform (301) - Medical Facilities (322) - Mental health (333) - Long-Term Care (334)
	Labour (5)	- Worker Safety (501) - Labour Unions (504) - Job Creation (599)
	Education (6)	- Higher (601) - Elementary & Secondary (602)
	Social Welfare (13)	- Low-Income Assistance (1302) - Child Care (1308)
	Housing (14)	- Community Development (1401) - Low-Income Assistance (1406) - Elderly (1408) - Homeless (1409)
	Culture (23)	- Culture (2300)
	Immigration (9)	- Immigration (900)

Table 3. Environment Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Environment	Environment (7)	- Drinking Water (701) - Waste Disposal (703) - Air Pollution (705) - Recycling (707)

Table 4. Infrastructure Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Infrastructure	Transportation (10)	- Mass (1001) - Highways (1002) - Infrastructure (1010)
	Technology (17)	- Telecommunications (1706) - Computers (1709) - R & D (1798)

Table 5. Justice and Public Safety Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Justice and public safety	Civil Rights (2)	- Minority discrimination (201) - Property Rights (299)
	Law and Crime (12)	- Agencies (1201) - Prisons (1205) - Juvenile Crime (1206) - Crime Control (1211)
	Defense (16)	- Intelligence (1603) - Military Aid (1606) - Honouring Veterans (1699)

Table 6. Resource Development Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Resource development	Agriculture (4)	- Food Inspection (403) - Fisheries and Fishing (408)
	Energy (8)	- Nuclear (801) - Electricity (802) - Alternative & Renewable (806)
	n/a	- Primary Industry (109)

Table 7. Government Operations Policy Codes

Main policy umbrella	Major topics included (including the number in my codebook)	Example subtopics included
Government Operations	Government Operations (2000)	- Intergovernmental Relations (2001) - Bureaucracy (2002) - Employees (2004) - Scandals (2010) - Legislative Reform (2099)
	Public Lands (2100)	- National Parks (2101) - Indigenous Affairs ³ (2102) - Dependencies & Territories (2105)
	Regional Politics (24)	- Northern (2402)

³ The CAP places Indigenous affairs under the major topic of Public Lands. I disagree with this comparison but have retained it for comparison purposes.

Chapter 4: Findings

Party Platform Prioritization: First Topics

Platforms are one of the best indicators of the state of democratic discourse. Studying platforms provides an opportunity to understand which topics are at the top of the policy agenda during a given period of time, and equally as important, which issues are not being discussed. Using a partisan lens, it can also be determined which parties (and party families) are talking about and prioritizing which specific issues. As explained by Petrocik (1996: 826), when parties are talking about issues during campaigns, not only does the salience of the issue increase, it also provides voters with a shortcut depending on who they perceive as being better able to handle the issue. Parties use platforms as a foundation for their communication strategies on the campaign; thus, the contents of a platform shape the leader's message, which is then featured in the media. According to public agenda-setting literature (Soroka 2002: 265, Cohen 1963: 13), the media influences the public agenda, shaping not what readers should necessarily think, but what they should be thinking *about*. Ultimately, platforms play an important role in setting the agenda, and, by studying them, one can gain a better sense of the policies that are both being promoted and demoted for a given period of time.

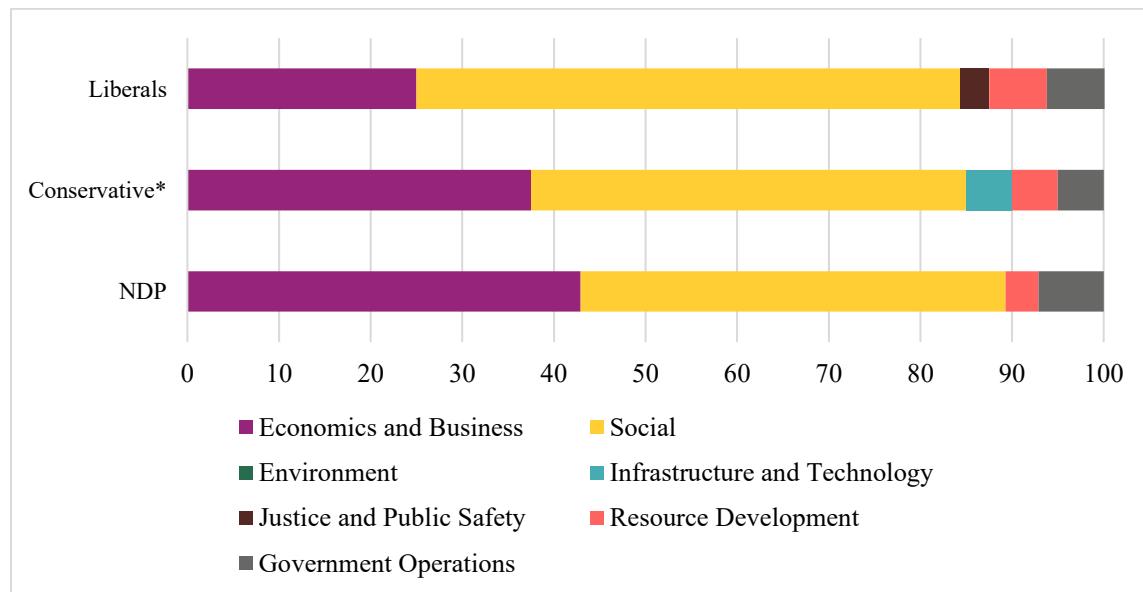
Each platform is drafted purposefully, with consideration to the order of policy issues and the amount of attention (space) dedicated to policy planks. Specifically, parties look to discuss issues that are already on the public agenda (i.e. voters already care about them) or that they think voters should care about. The top priorities for each party will appear earlier in the platform, with those of lesser importance appearing later (Wesley and Nauta 2020: 128). Further, issues of importance are likely to be given more space and repeated throughout the platform, highlighted through headings and section titles. Of course, only one issue can be first, and chapter one or the first topic can be interpreted as the single most important priority for a party in an election.

The majority of first topics in Canadian provincial platforms relate either to social policy or economics and business. Combined, these two policy areas account for over 80% of the first section topics of provincial platforms within the study period. This result is not particularly surprising, as both areas are core to provincial jurisdiction in Canada. Of course, the economy is central to all levels within Canada, including federal and provincial governments. In relation to

social policy, two major areas of social policy, education and hospitals, are entrenched in the Constitution as provincial jurisdiction.

The likelihood of choosing either social issues or economic and business issues is influenced by party labels. Figure 1 shows the first topic percentage by party, grouped into seven main policy areas: economics and business; social; environment; infrastructure; justice and public safety; resource development; and government operations. Non-traditional right-wing parties are contained under the Progressive Conservative Party banner for this figure.

Figure 1. First Topics in Canadian Provincial Election Platforms, 2003-2019, by Party



*Includes Progressive Conservative parties, the United Conservative Party, the Wildrose Party, and the Saskatchewan Party

Provincial Liberal parties were the most likely to have social policy as their first topic, with almost 60% of all first platform topics relating to social policy issues. This finding is consistent with the view that, at the provincial level, most Liberal parties tend to be progressive and socially minded (Wesley 2016a). Specifically, the most common topic within social policy for Liberals is education, followed by health and labour, then childcare. This result suggests Liberals are engaging in issue ownership. Petrocik (1996: 826) explains that candidates in elections will emphasize issues where they are advantaged and their opponents are less well-

regarded. He explains: “The theory of issue ownership finds a campaign effect when a candidate [or party] successfully frames the vote choice as a decision to be made in terms of problems facing the country that [they are] better able to “handle” than [their] opponent.” He defines “handling” as being able to resolve a problem that is concerning to voters. This is developed through a “reputation for policy and program interests, produced by a history of attention, initiative, and innovation towards these problems, which leads voters to believe that one of the parties (and its candidates) is more sincere and committed to doing something about them” (ibid).

Approximately half (48%) of Progressive Conservative parties (and non-traditional right-wing parties) had social issues as their first topic, mainly focusing on health and labour issues. This finding reinforces the idea that the platform must cover the entire issue landscape and cannot only play to the party’s strengths (Wesley & Nauta 2020: 128). In other words, right-wing parties need to speak to social policy issues, even if they do not traditionally own them. Interestingly, however, none of the Progressive Conservative parties had education as their first policy section.

The NDP was the least likely to have social issues as their first topic, with 46% of first topics dealing with social policy. Within social policy, over 75% of the NDP’s first issues related to health, while 8% related to education. As displayed in Figure 2 and Figure 3, only three parties had education as their top choice at least once (Liberals, NDP, and the Saskatchewan Party), compared to four parties that had health as their first chapter at least once (PC, NDP, Liberals, and Wildrose Party).

Figure 2. Percentage of All First Platform Topics Coded as Education, by Party

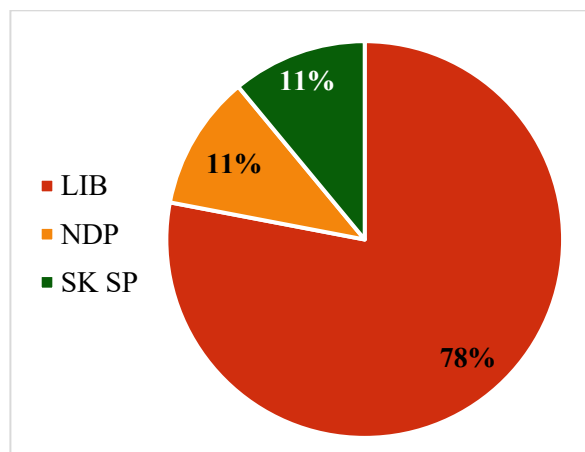
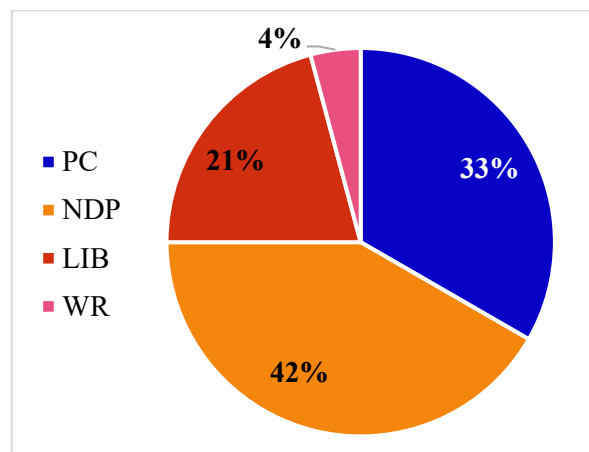


Figure 3. Percentage of All First Platform Topics Coded as Health, by Party



The NDP had the highest percentage of first topics relating to economics and business at 43%, compared to the PCs at 38%, and the Liberals at 25%. Within economics and business, the NDP addressed affordability and general macroeconomics (e.g. general diversification, or a combination of a variety of topics such as taxes, cost of living, and budgets) most often.

Two strong explanatory factors are available to understand this result. First, this finding may be due to the party acting as an advocate for affordability for the average voter who is struggling with the cost of living. For example, in the Ontario NDP’s 2011 platform titled “Change that puts people first: Ontario’s New Democrats plan for affordable change”, the first platform chapter was titled “Making life more affordable”. Similarly, the Alberta NDP had four priorities in their 2008 platform, the first of which was “making life more affordable”. In fact, 65% of the total platform chapters within the study dealing specifically with affordability were from New Democratic Parties. In comparison, 27% were Liberal parties and 9% were right-wing parties.

Second, the NDP may be highlighting economic and business topics as a form of inoculation. Traditionally in Canadian politics, the NDP’s greatest weakness lies in their ownership over economic and business topics, specifically that they are not “moderate, practical, or fiscally responsible enough to govern” (Wesley and Moyes 2014: 90). Because they are not known for issue ownership over economic topics, provincial New Democratic Parties may be

looking to reduce the risk perceived by voters on this issue. Therefore, addressing it first demonstrates the importance of the area to the parties and their brand.

Other topics besides social policy and economics were covered infrequently in the first chapter. The environment, for one, was never mentioned as a lead policy in any platform. The Manitoba NDP (2011), both the Liberal (2011) and PC (2015) parties in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Ontario PCs (2019) covered resource development in their first chapter, speaking to the importance of hydroelectricity (MB and ON) and oil and gas (NL) to each province’s political economy. In 2015, the Alberta Liberal Party addressed justice and public safety (specifically, civil rights) in the first section of their platform, reflecting the rise of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) as an issue on which they had assumed ownership. Infrastructure and transportation has also been prioritized by non-traditional right-wing parties, as both the Saskatchewan Party (2016) and the Wildrose Party (2015) focused on it in their first chapters in past elections. Finally, at least one provincial NDP, PC, and Liberal party focused on government operations first (the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party, Nova Scotia PCs, Newfoundland and Labrador PCs, and Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals).

Figure 4: First Topics in Canadian Provincial Election Platforms, 2003-2019, by Province

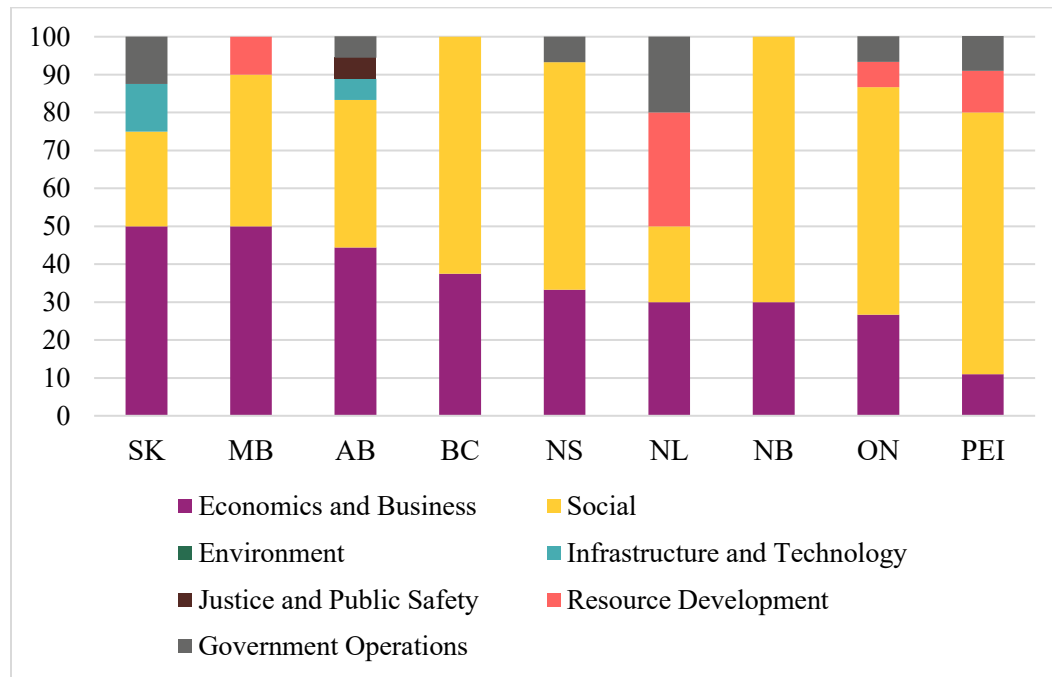


Figure 4, depicting first topics by province, shows that parties in Western Canada, led by Saskatchewan and Manitoba, were the most likely to have economic and business topics as their first platform chapter. Given that Western Canadians are more likely to prefer individual self-reliance over collective, public solutions (Dyck 2012: 35), it is not surprising that Western Canadian political parties prioritize macroeconomics, taxes, and the cost of living.

Oppositely, both PEI and New Brunswick had the highest percentage of first topics dealing with social policy (approximately 70%). Specifically within social policy, parties in these two provinces addressed health and labour most frequently. This tendency to prioritize social issues may be explained by the increased support for government intervention in the economy found in the Maritime provinces (Wiseman 2007: 158-159). Though PEI and New Brunswick are not homogeneous, they share common economic problems, and, as explained by Wesley and Marland (2020: 99-100): “[in Atlantic Canada], government is largely seen as being responsible for creating jobs. For many, social assistance and regional development programs are favoured over laissez-faire, small government ethos that is more prevalent in the West.”

Interestingly, while no parties in Alberta nor the majority of Atlantic provinces focused on resource development as their first section, almost one-third of platforms developed by major parties in Newfoundland and Labrador had resource development (including agriculture and energy) as their first topic. This could potentially be explained by the ubiquitous nature of natural resources and natural resource wealth in Alberta and Saskatchewan; instead of emphasizing resource development as the sole topic, it is woven into other policy areas of the platform such as economics and business and social policy. For example, in the Alberta NDP’s 2012 platform, the first section – titled ‘Providing quality public healthcare when you and your family need it’ – states: “We believe that it’s time that Alberta’s prosperity, drawn from our shared natural resource wealth, worked for all Albertans, not just a select few. And we’re going to spend the election showing how this can be done. Alberta’s NDP is committed to a new way of providing health care within our publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system.” (p. 6). Secondly, despite a shared connection to the fishing industry, Newfoundland and Labrador is distinct from other Atlantic provinces due to its relatively recent offshore oil and gas extraction projects, a reality that is reflected in Figure 4. Further, this issue may be heightened due to the combination of ideological similarities between the provincial Liberals and PCs (Marland 2016: 12) and the lack of issue ownership over natural resources.

Changes in Party Platform Prioritization

While the first chapter reflects the party's top priority, the ordering of other topics and commitments contained in the platform also reveal strategic decisions made by a party. Guided by polling data and market research, parties develop platforms which are used to present the party's plan for governance, target voters, and differentiate themselves from other parties. Though some parties use prior stances taken by the party as a foundation for their platform, changes in leadership and party status, as well as changes in the political, social, and economic environment, mean that each parties' platform is not always consistent over time. In fact, determining the consistency level for each party provides insights into party strategy, organizational structure, and responsiveness. For instance, consistency in platform priorities and emphasis indicates the stability of a party's brand over time. Whether party platforms are consistent also indicates the responsiveness of a party to changing citizen demands as well as changing environmental, technological, social, and economic circumstances. The use of the term "consistent" is not intended to be a normative judgement. Rather, this language is meant to be neutral, not to argue that being either consistent or inconsistent is "bad" or good". Inconsistency could be viewed as an indicator of democratic responsiveness, for example, but it could also be seen as evidence of opportunism or lack of focus. Instead, by being able to rank and group parties based on consistency levels, I am able to identify trends and patterns in, as well as make connections between, independent variables including party family, province/ region, leadership, and government or opposition status.

To determine the consistency level of each provincial party over the study period, I developed a consistency measure which contains three levels: consistent (i.e., static), somewhat consistent, and inconsistent (i.e., dynamic). I then established criteria for each level based on three factors: the consistency of the first priority, the volatility level of all priorities, and the number of orphan issues. These measures were chosen to ensure reliability and validity. The first measure signifies the importance placed on the first chapter topic for each party. Specifically, the first priority for each party (as evident by the section heading) is understood as the most important issue at a given election; therefore, a shift in the top priority is significant as it indicates a change in strategy and a change in the most important issue. This measure also directly supports the first research question (i.e. what policy priorities do provincial parties set out in their platforms?). I developed the second measure to evaluate the level of priority change.

This thesis argues that a decrease in the earliest mention of a topic signifies a decrease in importance of that issue to a party, while an increase signals an increased level of importance. This measure therefore indicates which issues are given more attention and importance on the political agenda, and which issues are falling off the agenda. Increased importance may also result in increased media and elite attention as well as in increased funding. Finally, this measure is fundamental to answering my second and third research questions, because I must first determine which issues change in order to explain potential reasons why issues change. I constructed the third measure to assess which issues (and how many issues) are entering and leaving the agenda over time. Completely eliminating an issue speaks to a very sharp decrease in importance. Measuring how frequently issues are eliminated also shows how committed a party is (or is not) to that policy area.

First, a provincial party is considered “consistent” if a) the first chapter is always the same topic across all elections in the period under study; b) the earliest mention of each topic remains within two ranks/ positions from platform to platform; and c) there are two or less issues that appear once and only once in the various platforms (“orphan” issues). A provincial party is considered “somewhat consistent” if a) first chapters feature two different topics over the study period; b) the earliest mention of each topic remains within four ranks/ positions from platform to platform; and c) there are two to four orphan issues among the various documents. Finally, a provincial party is considered “inconsistent” if a) first chapters featured more than two topics over the period of study; b) the earliest mention of each topic fluctuates five (5) or more ranks/ positions from platform to platform; and c) there are at least five (5) orphan issues.

It is also important to note that a provincial party must meet all three criteria in order to be considered in the “higher category” i.e. more consistent category. For example, if a party has the same first chapter topic and has only one orphan issues but has fluctuations greater than two positions from platform to platform, then they would be classified as somewhat consistent. This decision was intentional in order to maintain the stricter standard to be labelled as consistent. In other words, all three measures are important indicators which must be met.

The development of this criteria was data driven. I first created each provincial party’s graph. After this, I analyzed all 24 graphs. This was done in order to determine valid and reliable measures to group similar graphs (i.e. provincial parties) together based on their patterns.

Table 8. Consistency Criteria

Consistent	Somewhat consistent	Inconsistent
<p>1. First Priority: First chapter is consistent - always the same topic across elections.</p> <p>2. Volatility: Minimal fluctuations - 1st mentions of topics remain within 2 ranks (positions).</p> <p>3. Orphan Issues: Few orphan issues – two (2) or less issues appear once and only once.</p>	<p>1. First Priority: First chapter differs slightly - there are two (2) different topics or less as the first chapter across elections.</p> <p>2. Volatility: Moderate fluctuations - 1st mentions of topics fluctuate between two (2) and four (4) ranks.</p> <p>3. Orphan Issues: Some orphan issues – two (2) to four (4) issues appear once and only once.</p>	<p>1. First Priority: First chapter differs widely - across elections, there are more than two (2) different topics as the first chapter.</p> <p>2. Volatility: Considerable fluctuations - 1st mentions of topics fluctuate five (5) or more ranks.</p> <p>3. Orphan Issues: Many orphan issues – five (5) or more issues appear once and only once.</p>
MB PC	BC NDP BC LIB AB NDP ON LIB NS NDP NS PC PEI PC*	AB LIB AB PC AB WR SK SP SK NDP MB NDP ON NDP ON PC NB LIB NB PC NS LIB NL LIB NL PC PEI PEI LIB* GRN*

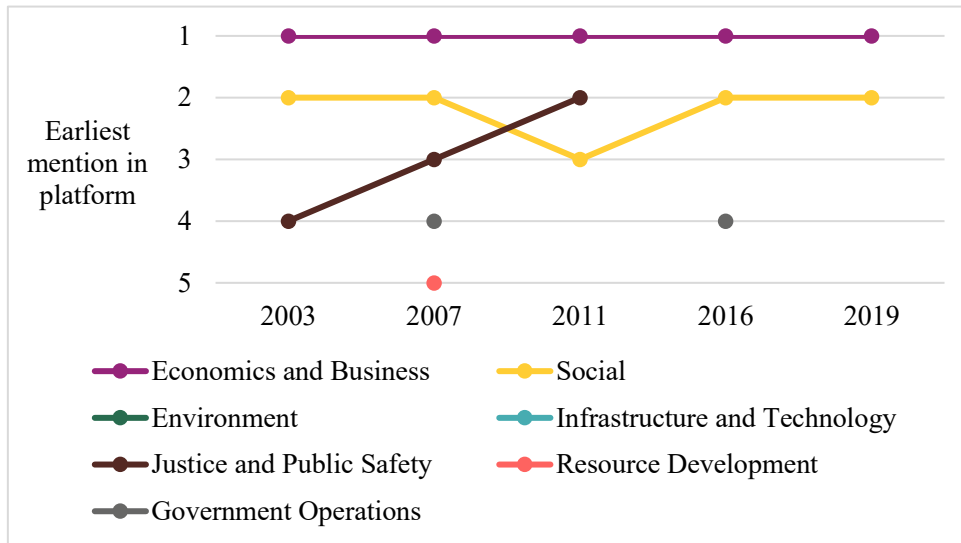
*Platforms from the beginning of the study period were unavailable; therefore, the three parties’ consistency levels are not fully comparable with other provinces

Using this criteria, only the Manitoba PCs were identified as consistent across all elections in the study period. As shown in Figure 5, their opening policy chapter was consistently based on economics and business⁴. Across elections, the greatest priority change was justice and public safety, which moved from 4th in 2003 to 2nd in 2011. Finally, the party only ever had one orphan issue across all elections (resource development in 2007). This level of consistency is surprising, given that the party had three leaders over the course of this period (Murray in 2003,

⁴ The y-axis corresponds with the earliest mention of the topic/policy issue in terms of platform chapters. For instance, economics and business is consistently ranked as 1st since it was the topic of every opening chapter in platforms for the Manitoba PCs; justice and public safety was ranked as 4th in 2003 because it was the topic of the fourth chapter/ section in the 2003 Manitoba PC platform.

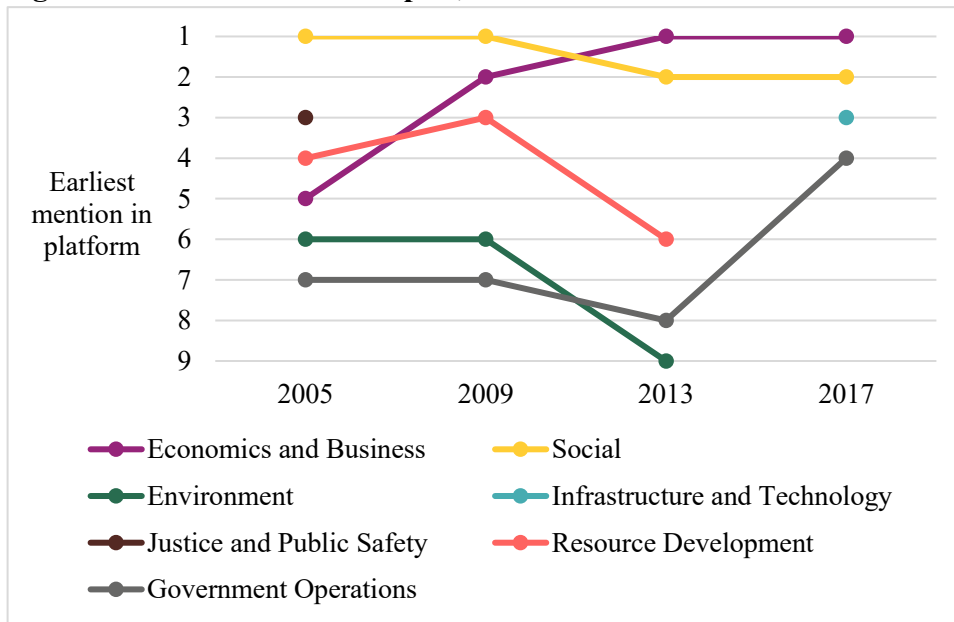
McFayden in 2007 & 2011, and Pallister in 2016 & 2019). As well, three of the five elections resulted in disappointing outcomes. Given this, we would have expected the party to shift priorities in an attempt to rebrand. Potential explanatory factors will be examined in the following section.

Figure 5. First Mention of Topics, Manitoba PCs



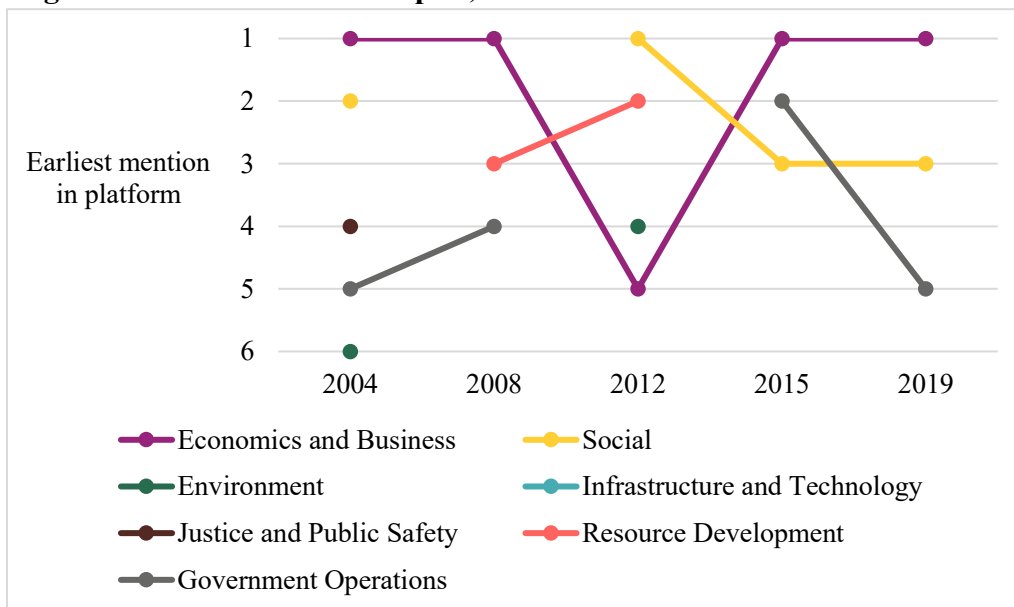
Next, seven provincial parties were classified as somewhat consistent: BC NDP, BC Liberals, Alberta NDP, Ontario Liberals, Nova Scotia NDP, Nova Scotia PCs, and the Prince Edward Island PC party. Because a provincial party must satisfy all three criteria to be considered consistent, the Ontario Liberals were coded as somewhat consistent despite the first topic in all platforms addressing social issues. However, all other parties classified as somewhat consistent had variations in the topics of their first sections. Of those in the level of somewhat consistent, the BC NDP, AB NDP, and NS PCs had the greatest volatility, with at least one topic moving four spots. For example, in 2005 the earliest the BC NDP mentioned economics and business topics in their platform was fifth; by 2017, this topic was first. Similarly, government operations moved from 8th in 2013 up to fourth in 2017. As shown in Figure 6, the biggest changes correspond with changes in party leadership: James (2005 & 2009), Dix (2013), and Horgan (2017).

Figure 6. First Mention of Topics, British Columbia NDP



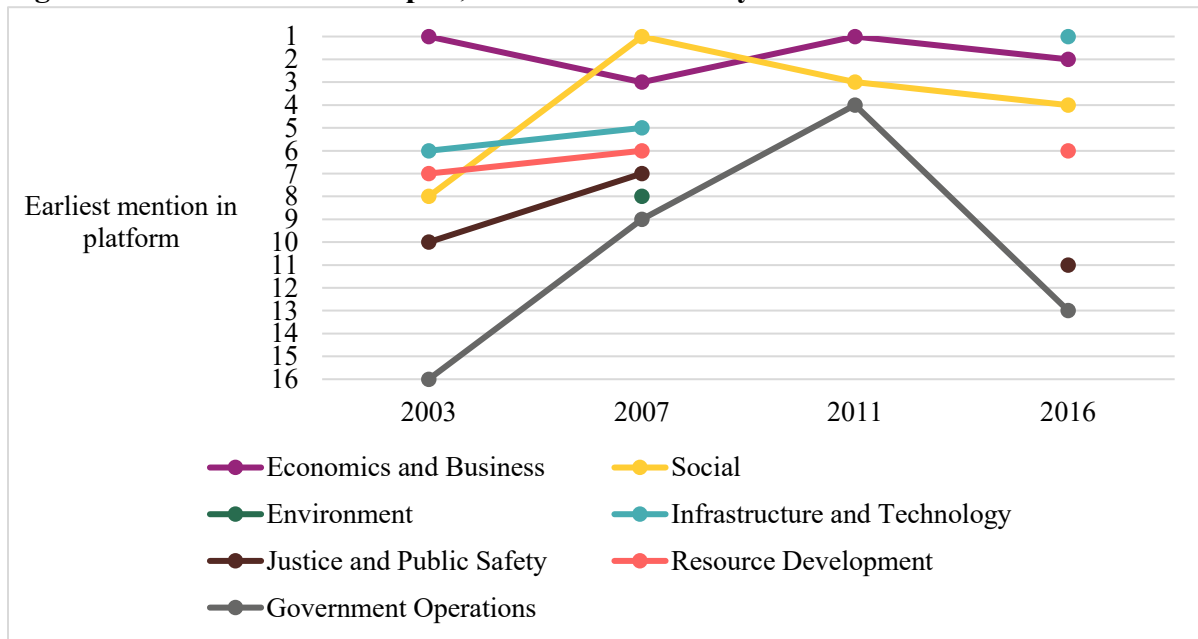
For the Alberta NDP, the biggest change in priority level and significance was also economics and business. Usually, the Alberta NDP had this topic first, but switched their strategy in 2012, bumping this down to fifth. However, in 2015, they switched back, bringing economics and business topic up to first again, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. First Mention of Topics, Alberta NDP



The remaining 15 provincial parties were classified as inconsistent, representing more than half of all provincial parties. Within this category, some provincial parties were less volatile, including the Manitoba NDP, Nova Scotia Liberals and New Brunswick Liberals. All three provincial parties only had two different first topics, and priority shifts were six or fewer ranks. Though this is still considered inconsistent according to the criteria, the majority of platforms within this category were far more volatile. As show in Figure 8, the Saskatchewan Party first listed government operations as 16th in 2003, 9th in 2007, and fourth in 2011, only to drop this down to 13th in 2016. Other topics such as social policy also changed priority levels, going from 8th in 2003 to the first chapter in 2007. This level of inconsistency is especially noteworthy considering the party had only two leaders during this study period. Due to the lack of leadership change, as well as the linear upward trajectory in terms of popularity, the findings suggest that the Saskatchewan Party employed a market-oriented approach.

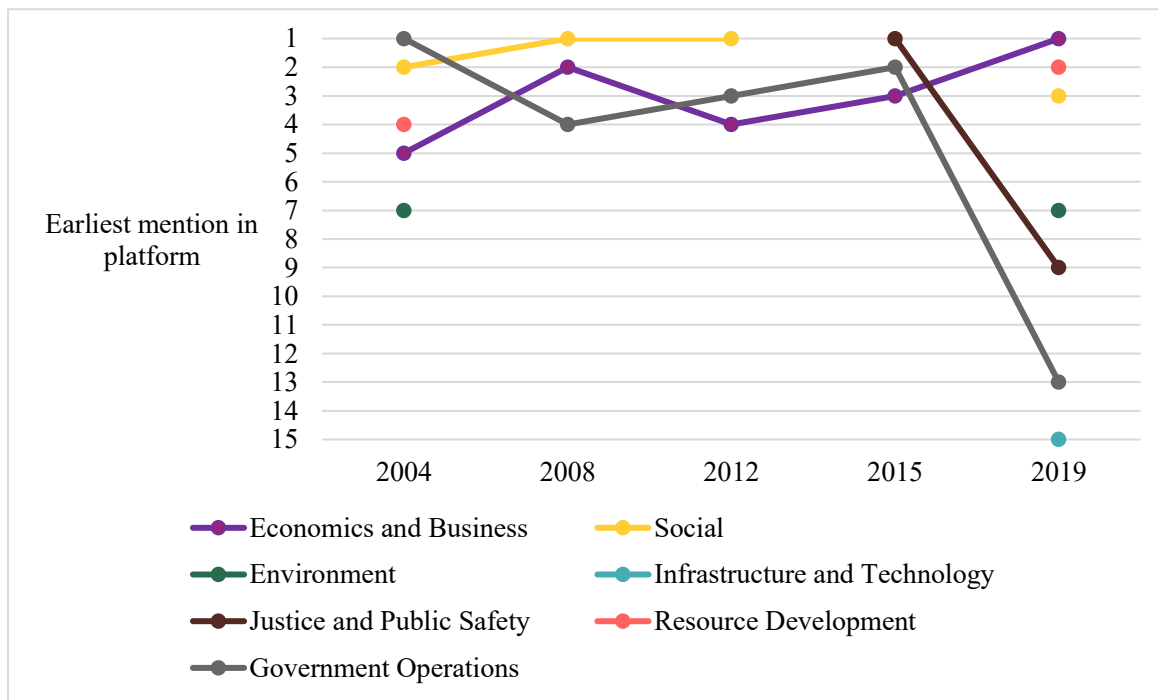
Figure 8. First Mention of Topics, Saskatchewan Party



Further, four provincial parties had different topics as their first priority in each election under study: the Alberta Liberals, the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals, the Newfoundland and Labrador PCs, and the PEI Green Party. As show in Figure 2, parties in Newfoundland and Labrador were the most likely to have a variety of first topics. However, the Alberta Liberals are

unique to other Western provinces in that they have four different first topics: government operations in 2004; social policy (health) in 2008 and 2012; justice and public safety (civil rights) in 2015; and economics and business in 2019. As displayed in Figure 10, the party made the biggest changes in priority levels in their 2019 platform, where the first priority topic changes, new topics are introduced or re-introduced, and the importance of government operations and justice and public safety topics greatly decreases.

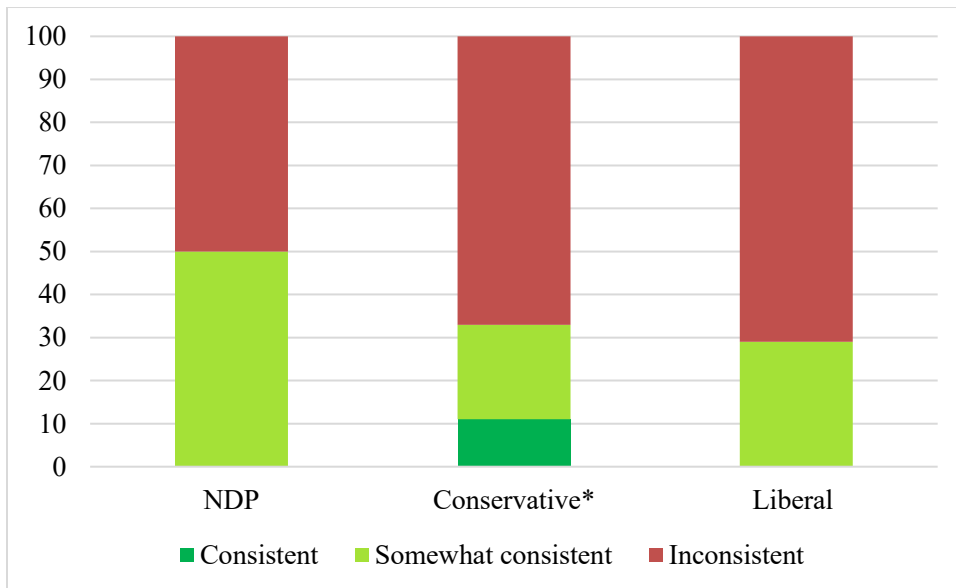
Figure 9. First Mention of Topics, Alberta Liberal Party



After all provincial parties were categorized, I examined the level of consistency by region/ province and party to assess if there is a regional/ provincial and/ or partisan effect on the level of consistency. While there was no strong provincial or regional effect, the level of consistency did vary by party. As displayed in Figure 10, provincial Liberal parties were the most likely to be classified as inconsistent (71%), closely followed by PC and other non-traditional right-wing parties (67%), a finding that aligns with the view that the Liberal party, especially in comparison to the NDP, is a catch-all organization that is more willing to shift its ideological identity and policy brand to appeal to different elements of its big tent coalition.

Provincial New Democratic Parties were the most likely to be somewhat consistent (50%). This finding suggests that New Democratic Parties are more of a product-oriented organization that tends to maintain their brand image. Provincial PC parties, as well as other non-traditional right-wing parties including the Alberta Wildrose and the Saskatchewan Party, were more mixed. While the Manitoba PCs were the only provincial party to be consistent, two PC parties were somewhat consistent, and six parties (including the Wildrose and Saskatchewan Party) were inconsistent.

Figure 10. Consistency Level Across All elections, by Party



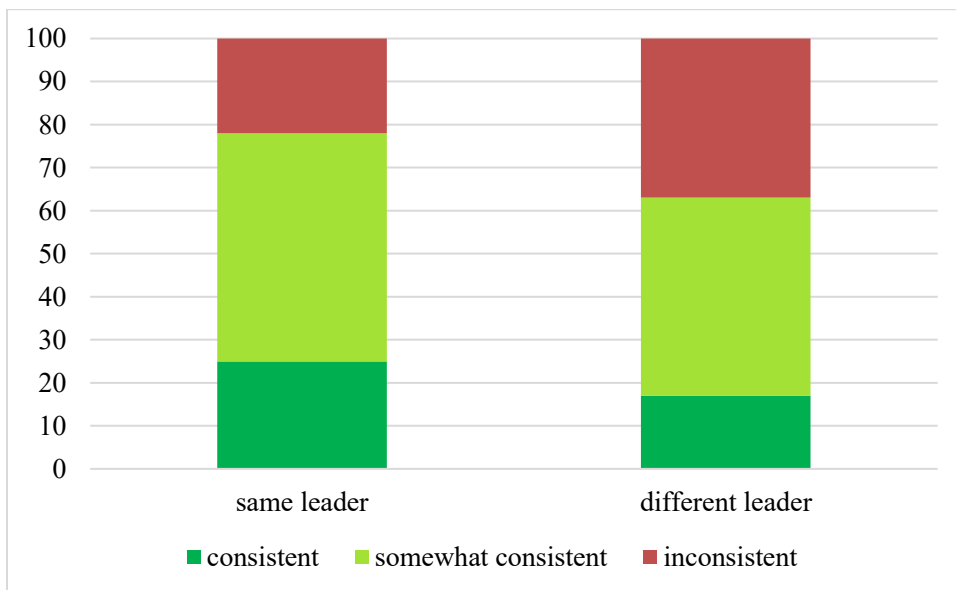
* Includes the Wildrose Party and Saskatchewan Party

Overall, the aggregate data shows that priorities, as outlined by the first chapters in a platform, follow partisan and, to a lesser extent, regional patterns. However, when looking at the entire content of the platform, the majority of provincial parties are inconsistent in their prioritization of policy issues. This goes against the perception that political parties are generally risk-averse organizations that are resistant to change, though it has been argued that this categorization is based on a faulty or overgeneralized premise that needs to consider the role of electoral performance (Harmel and Janda 1994).

Therefore, despite the continuous and unchanging variables of party and province, other internal and external factors that are not continuous across the study period must affect the content of platforms. In other words, party platform drafters are not only influenced by party family and regional/provincial political culture when drafting a platform, but are influenced by a multitude of varying political, social, and economic factors, as well as factors such as party leadership and party status. Because these variables are not consistent across the entire study period, an election-by-election analysis was required in order to analyze the shifts in party platform policies and priorities.

First, I determined the consistency level *between* elections for each provincial party. This allows for an analysis of other measures that vary between elections. Consequently, the previous consistency level criteria (minus the third measure of orphan issues) was applied, measuring the consistency between every two adjacent elections for each provincial party. Each two election periods were then coded based on whether the provincial party in these two elections were led by the same leader or two different leaders, as shown in Figure 11.

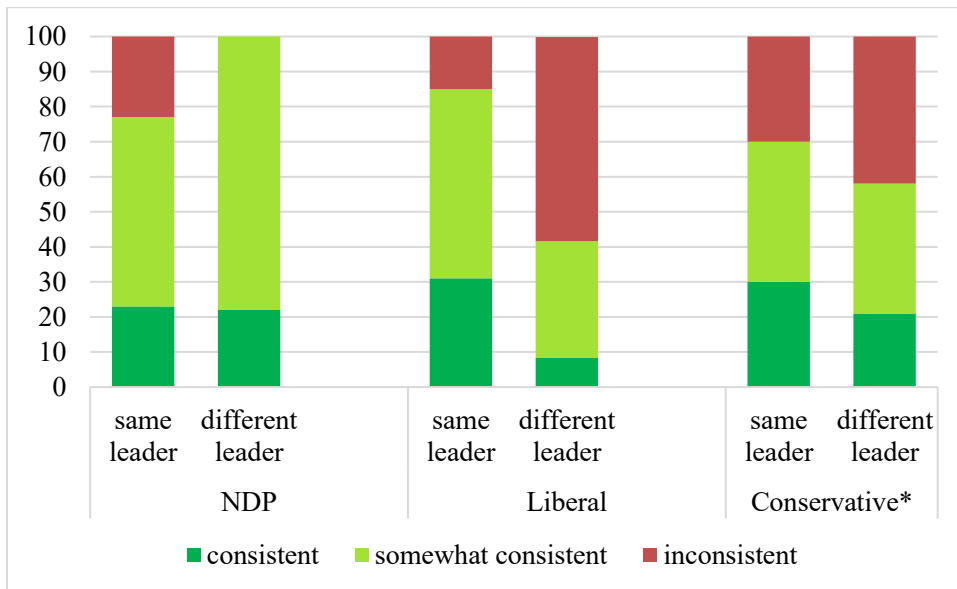
Figure 11. Consistency Level Between Elections Based on Leadership, all Provincial Parties



Despite the significant influence of the leader over party decisions in Canadian political parties, the above findings suggest a minimal increase in consistency for parties with the same

leader compared to those with a different leader, and a moderate increase in inconsistency for parties with two different leaders compared to those with the same leader. This data is compatible with empirical studies that conclude there is a lack of convincing evidence that changes in party leadership cause party policy change (Billie 1997; Harmel et al. 2008; Meyer 2013), though it has been suggested that, under certain conditions, leadership changes can bring about policy changes (Fagerholm 2016: 503). As argued by Harmel et al. (1995), the extent to which changes in leadership affect party policy change depends on numerous factors, including: the abilities of the new leader to enact the change they want, including the extent to which the party is able or inclined to allow shifts; and the degree to which the changes the new party leader wants are different from those of the former leader, if at all. Though the latter may be difficult to measure without conducting elite interviews, the former can be measured through a partisan lens. Thus, the findings from Figure 11 were then broken down by party to analyze if there is a partisan effect on consistency levels and leadership changes, as displayed in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Consistency Level Between Elections Based on Leadership, by Party



Based on party-organization literature, the influence of the leader may depend on the strength of the party’s activists or the degree to which the party structure is based on hierarchy (Harmel et al. 1995: 6; Meyer 2013; Schumacher et al. 2013). According to findings from

Schumacher et al. (2013), the degree to which parties change policy positions is affected by the degree to which the party is leader-dominated or activist-dominated. Specifically, activist-dominated parties respond more to changes in activists' preferences, while changes in party positions in leadership-dominated parties are due to mean voter position change and office exclusion. Traditionally, New Democratic Parties have a more fully developed organizational structure (Archer and Whitehorn 1997: 3), which institutionalizes the power of activists, including organized labour and a variety of caucuses. For instance, organized labour has enjoyed formal status within the party's decision-making structures since the party's formation (Jansen and Young 2009: 663), though it is meant to act as a minority voice. Further, NDP conventions play a major role in drafting and authorizing policy resolutions, more so than other major parties. Ultimately, leaders of the NDP have less latitude than leaders of Liberal and Conservative parties to shape public policy (Archer and Whitehorn 1990: 102). This framework can help explain why the NDP, as a more activist-dominated party in comparison to Liberal and PC parties, would show similar consistency levels under the same leader and a different leader. Oppositely, Liberal parties show the largest variation under different leaders, as party leadership is more influential in setting party priorities. This finding is consistent with similar evidence that found manifestos from Britain's Conservative Party reflected the personal style of the leader more than those of the Labour Party, due to the freedom and autonomy enjoyed by Conservative leader over party issues (Beloff and Peele 1985: 178).

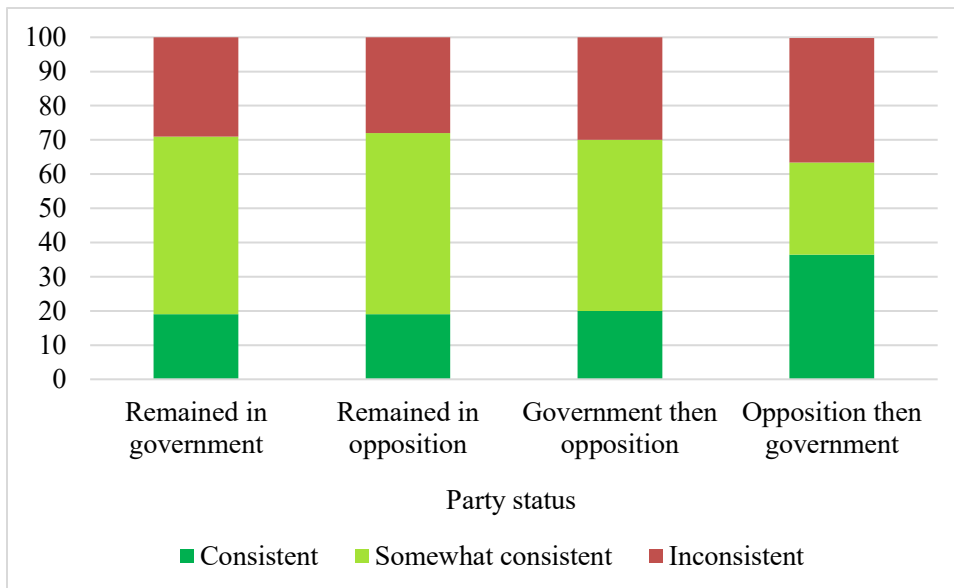
In addition to the party's internal structure, the NDP's approach to political marketing may help explain the patterns shown above. As outlined by McGrane (2019: 16), the NDP's marketing strategy is intertwined with its ideology. Because of this, the NDP is naturally more of what Lees-Marshment (2001) describes as a product-oriented and sales-oriented party, focusing more on their core beliefs and selling these to voters. Compared to parties on the right (and, to a lesser extent, those in the centre), parties on the left (i.e. the NDP) would be less comfortable with a shift toward a market orientation.

It is important to note, however, that contemporary NDP leaders, at least those leaders whose party has formed government, have increasingly shifted toward a political market view (McGrane 2019: 72). Within the NDP umbrella, those parties who have formed government are more inclined to be an electoral professional party, behaving differently from those who have not formed government. This is because being in power can shift a provincial parties' mindset,

leading to those who have been in government adopting a more inconsistent, political market orientation, and those who have not formed government maintaining a more consistent product and sales orientation.

A second discontinuous variable is the status of the party when the platform was drafted. For each provincial party, each two election periods were coded with one of the following: remained in government; remained in opposition; were in government but then became opposition; were in opposition but then formed government. There are a number of reasons why party status may affect the contents of a platform. The majority of parties – especially those analyzed in this study – are driven by the desire to win office, as argued by Anthony Downs (1957). It is intuitive that a party that wins office would maintain a consistent, ‘winning’ platform – those who did not win, would change their platform. As displayed in Figure 13⁵, the only status that appears to influence the consistency level of a platform is going from opposition to government status. This finding is especially interesting as it is the only category to be polarized; while all other statuses are 50% or more somewhat consistent, the majority of those in the “opposition then government” status are at the extremes – consistent and inconsistent.

Figure 13. Consistency level between elections based on party status, all parties



⁵ See appendix for a full list of provincial parties’ consistency levels by status.

The largest portion of inconsistent parties are found in the category of those who were in opposition during the first election, but then formed government and thus drafted their subsequent platform while in government. A reason that these parties may change platform policies and priorities is due to the influence of the public service. Those in government are privy to the expertise of the bureaucracy, who can indirectly provide expert policy and research advice. For parties who were in opposition but then formed government, the advice from the professional public service may have changed their priorities or caused a shift in commitments from one election to the next. Parties may also find that they can rarely implement their stated goals once in government and must shift to a platform that is more realistic in the subsequent election, leading to a winning party that still shifts their priorities and policies. Despite this, the “opposition then government” category also contains the largest percentage of parties that were consistent, though the percentage is mitigated when combined with the smaller somewhat consistent category. Parties in this category may have been more consistent due to a strategy to showcase their record, or a “promise made, promise kept” approach.

An additional finding shows that consistency levels of the parties that remained in government during both elections are almost identical to those that remained in opposition in both elections; however, explanatory factors may help in differentiating those that remained consistent in government across both elections and those that remained consistent in opposition across both elections. First, those that remained consistent and in government for both elections typically kept the same leader (75%), while those who stayed consistent and in opposition across both elections were more evenly split between the same leader (43%) and different leaders (57%).

This difference, though, does not fully explain why parties who are in opposition for both elections keep a consistent platform, a seemingly counter-intuitive campaign tactic. However, studies evaluating party shifts and parties’ governmental status suggest that opposition parties may be less likely to shift their position if they have strong organizations and are policy-seeking (or product- / sales-oriented) parties (Schumacher et al. 2015, Schumacher et al. 2013). As displayed in Table 9, of the seven instances of provincial parties that remained in opposition across both elections but kept consistent platforms, three are held by the Manitoba PCs (the only party to be labelled consistent at the aggregate level), and three are held by various provincial NDP parties – the Alberta NDP 2004-2008; the Ontario NDP 2007-2011; and the Nova Scotia

NDP 2003-2006. As previously mentioned in this chapter, New Democratic parties who have not formed government (or who have been out of government for a long period of time), may be less inclined to be a market-oriented (and therefore inconsistent) party. This theory helps explain the rationale behind the NDP parties who are in opposition and remained consistent.

Table 9. Consistency Level by Party Status

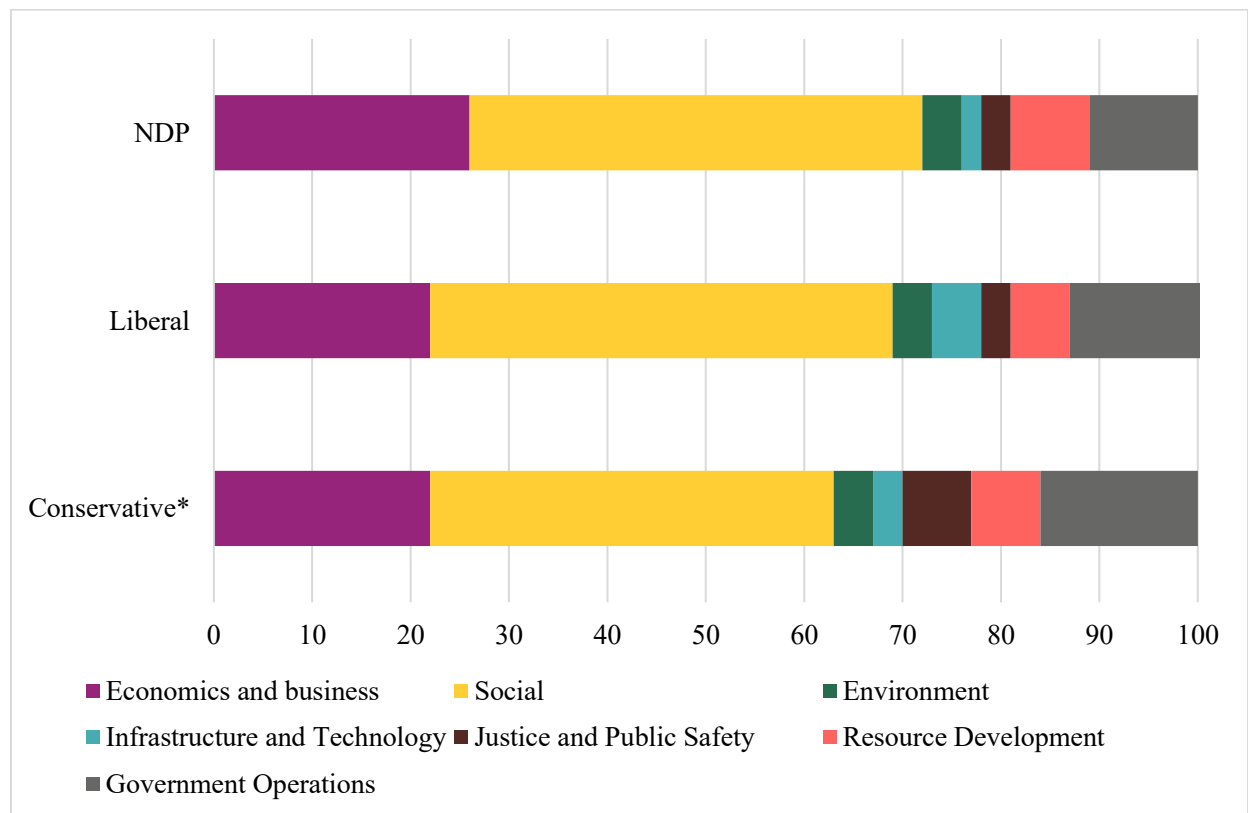
Parties in government both elections	Consistent: BC LIB 13-17 (same leader) AB PC 04-08 (different leader) ON LIB 07-11 (same leader) ON LIB 14-18 (same leader)	Inconsistent: SK SP 11-16 (same leader) MB NDP 11-16 (same leader) NL PC 07-11 (different leader) PEI LIB 11-15 (different leader) AB PC 12-15 (different leader) NL PC 11-15 (different leader)
Parties in opposition both elections	Consistent: AB NDP 04-08 (same leader) AB LIB 08-12 (different leader) MB PC 03-07 (different leader) MB PC 07-11 (same leader) MB PC 11-16 (different leader) ON NDP 07-11 (different leader) NS NDP 03-06 (same leader)	Inconsistent: AB LIB 15-19 (different leader) AB WR 08-12 (different leader) AB WR 12-15 (different leader) SK SP 03-07 (different leader) ON NDP 03-07 (same leader) ON NDP 14-18 (same leader) NS LIB 03-06 (different leader) NS LIB 06-09 (different leader) NL LIB 07-11 (different leader) NL LIB 11-15 (different leader)

Attention (Space) to Policy Issues in Platforms

The amount of space or attention given to issues within a platform is also indicative of a parties' priorities, approaches, and strategy. Using the same chapter titles and coding that was applied in the first measure (prioritization), the emphasis placed on policy topics can also be calculated. Specifically, the amount of space dedicated to issues as a percentage of the entire platform was determined. For example, in the Alberta NDP's 2015 platform, the party had six main sections: two sections dealt with economics and business (33%), three dealt with social policy (50%) and one dealt with government operations (17%). For a majority of provincial parties, the largest proportion of their platforms (as evident by section titles) is social issues; the second largest section is economics and business.

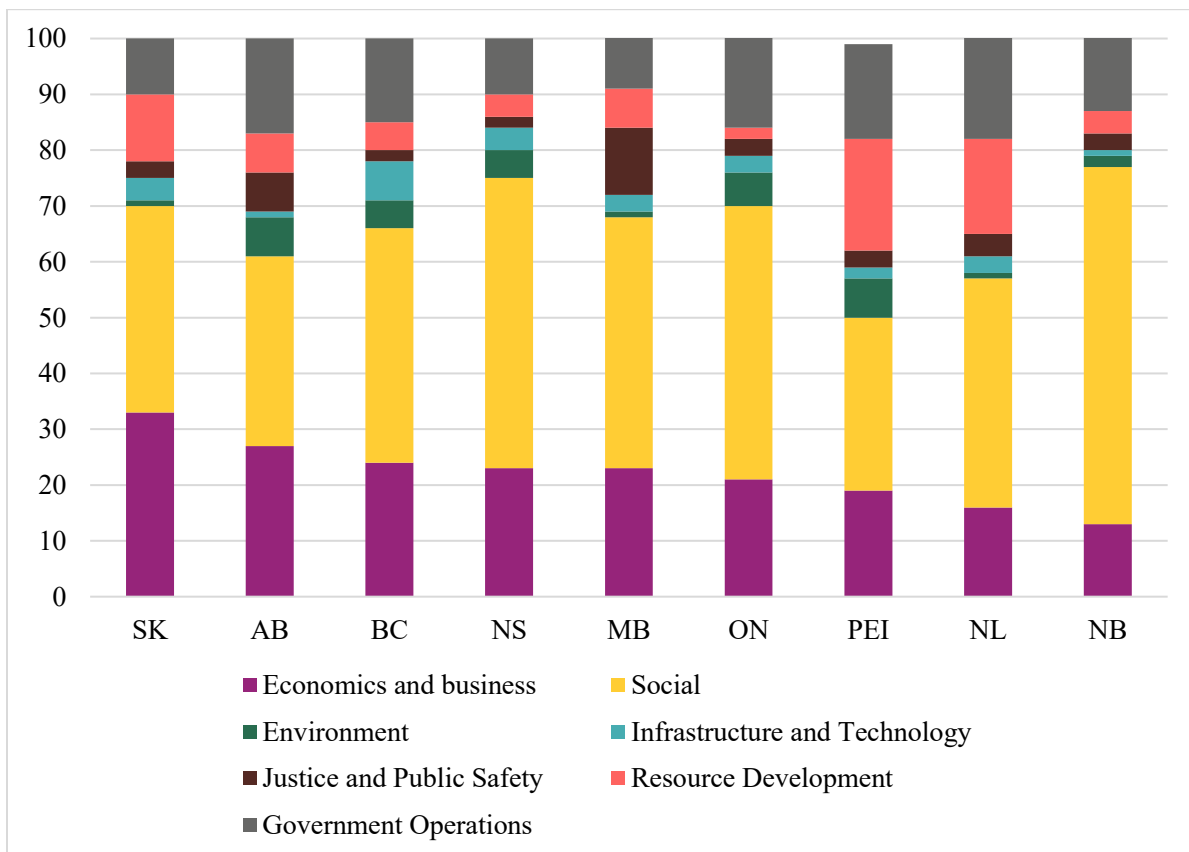
Results were also analyzed to assess if there is a regional/ provincial and/or partisan effect on the amount of attention given to issues. Averaged across all provinces, the New Democrats, Liberals, and Progressive Conservatives (including non-traditional right-wing parties) displayed similar levels of attention to different types of policy issues. As shown in Figure 14, the provincial New Democratic Parties devoted slightly more space to issues related to economics and business topics (26%) compared to Liberals (22%) and conservative parties (22%). The NDP (46%) and Liberals (47%) were virtually indistinguishable in the amount of space dedicated to social issues, while the conservative parties dedicated marginally less space (41%). Conservative parties, however, did emphasize justice and public safety issues more than the Liberals and New Democratic parties, but only by a few percentage points, on average. Ultimately, when looking at the amount of space dedicated to policy topics, as an average, provincial parties are nearly indistinguishable.

Figure 14. Average Space Dedicated to Policy Issues in Platforms, by Party



Next, results were analyzed to determine if there is a regional or provincial effect. Similar to patterns found when evaluating the first chapter topics, those in the west were more likely to emphasize economic and business topics. For instance, on average, parties in Saskatchewan dedicated one-third of their platform chapters to economics and business issues, while parties in New Brunswick, on average, dedicated only 13%. Studying platform emphasis by province also highlights provincial anomalies. First, parties in Manitoba dedicate the most space to justice and public safety. At 12%, this is 5 percentage-points higher than the next closest province (Alberta, at 7%). One explanation for this may be due to the predominance of Winnipeg in provincial politics. Specifically, the balance of the seats in Manitoba is located in the suburban Winnipeg swing ridings (Wesley 2016b) who are concerned about crime rates. This issue also crossed partisan boundaries. In studying the top of mind concerns and issues, Adams (2008: 151) found that Manitobans concerned about social violence and crime was a major issue regardless of party preference (NDP and PC).

Figure 15. Average Space Dedicated to Policy Issues in Platforms, by Province



The data also shows that parties in Prince Edward Island emphasize resource development in their platforms, with one-fifth of all platform topics, on average, covering this issue. While parties in P.E.I. did emphasize topics under the resource development umbrella (specifically agriculture), this was also skewed by the P.E.I. Green Party's 2007 platform, which only included one topic (agriculture). It is also of note that many provincial parties lack a focus on infrastructure and technology throughout their platforms. While parties in British Columbia, on average, have the most space dedicated to infrastructure and technology topics (7%), this is still relatively low, especially compared to other topics that are given more attention.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

Summary of Findings

The preceding analyses have looked to detail the priorities of political parties via their election platforms, as well as cover the continuity and shifts in their attention to issues. Despite the platform's importance in setting the agenda, the study of policy elements within party platforms remains largely underdeveloped in Canadian political science, especially in regard to provincial parties. However, platforms serve a number of purposes – they are one of the most important elements of a party's brand, and they signal the policy priorities for the incoming government and opposition. Conducting a content analysis of major provincial parties' platform chapter titles suggests that some, but not all, aspects of and shifts in provincial party platforms are influenced by partisan or regional/ provincial factors.

The platform's first topic, seen as the most important priority for a party in a given election, varies across regional and party lines. Most major provincial parties list either social policy issues or economic and business issues first. This finding speaks to the jurisdictional divisions within the Canadian federation. Though this result may not be surprising, it is, nonetheless, important. For instance, health and education are highlighted frequently within the first chapter topic, both of which are major and important jurisdictional responsibilities of the provinces.

Liberal parties are more likely to prioritize social issues in the first section of their platforms, a finding consistent with the view that Liberal parties at the provincial level tend to be progressive and socially-minded. Interestingly, New Democratic parties are the most likely of any major provincial party to list economic and business topics as their primary priority. I argue this can be explained by a combination of inoculation against criticisms that the party is not fiscally responsible, as well as the party's decision to prioritize affordability issues and cost of living challenges. This finding demonstrates two different platform strategies; while the Liberals appear to be engaging in issue ownership by covering social issues more frequently, the NDP are taking an opposite approach by giving attention to issues they are not seen as owning, a term that may be referred to as inoculation. Despite their lack of issue ownership, right-wing parties did address social issues in their first chapter section, though to a lesser extent than Liberal parties. This can be attributed to the need to cover the entire issue landscape within a platform.

Regionally, parties in Western Canada, led by Saskatchewan and Manitoba, were found to be the most likely to have economic issues as the topic of their first chapter sections, reflecting the preference of Western Canadians for individual self-reliance over collective and public solutions. On the other hand, eastern provinces such as Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick more frequently cover social issues in their first chapter sections, evidence of their propensity to prioritize government intervention.

Priority levels do not remain consistent across elections for each party; in fact, only one party, the Manitoba PCs, was found to be consistent in prioritization levels across the study period. Though parties are traditionally labelled as conservative organizations that avoid change, evidence from Canadian provincial parties suggests otherwise. In fact, these findings suggest inconsistency is the norm, not the exception. This general level of volatility could be explained by a period effect, as the study took place during an economically and politically volatile era in Canadian (provincial) politics. Still, relatively short tenures of party leaders (especially for parties with leader-dominated structures) as well as general electoral volatility found in Canadian provinces can also be explanatory factors.

When looking at consistency levels, while we do not see clear patterns of variation by region or province, it is likely that party families did play a role. As supported by the literature, findings in this project suggest that parties with a strong base of activists, such as the New Democrats, are less likely to change policies based on leaders' preferences. This was reflected in the high consistency levels for New Democratic parties despite having different leaders, especially in comparison to Liberal and Conservative parties. In addition to the party's internal structure, the NDP's approach to political marketing may also help explain these patterns, as they are the most likely to employ a sales- or product-oriented lens (Wesley and Moyes 2014).

Party labels are less helpful in explaining variations in the amount of attention (space) dedicated to policy issues, as the NDP, Liberals, and right-wing parties showed similar levels of attention to different types of policy issues. Despite this, parties in Western Canada were more likely to support economic topics, a similar finding to patterns found when evaluating first chapter topics.

Future Research

While election research continues to be an important subject in the academic research, this thesis has highlighted the importance of studying political platforms as policy documents. In fact, political platforms provide an indication of the state of democratic discourse, providing an opportunity to understand which topics are at the top of the policy agenda and which issues are not.

It is believed that this analysis provided a comprehensive overview of the Canadian provincial party system landscape over the study period. Of course, an evident gap in this research is the exclusion of the province of Quebec. Despite Quebec's unique status within the federation, determining and understanding the policy shifts in the province's platforms are of value in order to draw political and provincial comparisons. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to apply similar methodologies to the study of political platforms in Quebec.

Overall, the present study contributes to our understanding of Canadian politics as it is the first time this type of research has been studied at the provincial level. In doing so, it provides a model for analyzing platforms at the federal level, employing the same or novel research questions. For instance, do parties at the federal level set out the same policy priorities in their platforms, such as focusing on social and economics and business most frequently in their first section? Alternatively, it would be important to consider which areas of provincial jurisdiction are highlighted in federal parties' platforms. Ultimately, researchers are encouraged to apply a similar analysis used in this study to major parties at the federal level.

Platforms prior to the study period could also be analyzed. Based on the theoretical frameworks applied in this thesis, it is likely that researchers would find more consistency in terms of party policy priorities over time, particularly as one travels further back in Canadian history. Parties of the early-twentieth century would be more likely to have a product-orientation instead of a sales- or market-orientation. Parties in previous eras may also be less inconsistent than parties in the current study period due to the slower pace of policy and societal change. Further, differences across provinces would be lessened by the prevalence of integrated (versus split or truncated) parties (Carty and Stewart 1996). Researchers are encouraged to discuss whether their findings suggest a uniqueness in the study period in this project.

Due to the value in using provinces or subnational governments as laboratories, such an analysis could be applied to other federations with similar subnational party systems, such as Australia and the United States. Further, lessons could be applied to similar party systems where parties employ a sales- or market-orientated approach, such as in the United Kingdom.

This analysis of Canadian provincial platforms reveals the final decisions regarding a party's level of issue prioritization and emphasis; however, background factors and internal discussions regarding goals are absent, with the exception of autobiographical records of leaders and platform drafters. To better understand campaign strategies motivating policy switches and prioritization changes, future researchers are encouraged to interview platform drafters in each province and party. Elite interviews can help to verify the arguments presented here, as well as provide further explanatory factors such as the influence of stakeholders such as lobbyists, as well as the allocation of influence between advisors and leaders.

Closing Thoughts

Political parties set the agenda through their platforms, letting voters decide on a narrow set of issues that they have defined; studying political platforms thus provides an important window into the past and future of democratic discourse in the country. Ultimately, parties' plans for the future are important, and we need to come up with a rigorous method of evaluating how and why these plans change. This thesis lays the methodological and theoretical foundation for future inquires into Canadian politics, providing a glimpse into priority setting in Canadian provincial politics from 2003 to 2019. Despite what some view as increasing tribalism in Canadian politics, whether in rhetoric or in actuality, Canadian politics does contain many valence issues, a fact shown in the significant portion of platform content dedicated to such topics. Differentiation, then, between parties lies not in the positions that they take, but in the set of issues they decide to prioritize. As this thesis demonstrates, understanding how and why parties differ in their prioritization, across time and space, is an important element to consider when studying party politics in Canada.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Codebook

Rules: Titles/ Chapters

1. Code into one and only one policy area.
2. If the chapter fits under multiple subheadings within the same heading, use the general subheading. For example, if it fits under medical facilities and manpower within health, use general.
3. If the chapter title is ambiguous or the heading seems to encompass more than one policy area/main heading (i.e. if it refers to education AND health) refer to any subheadings or platform text below to determine the first policy area. The first subject as a major subheading or point of action in that chapter will determine the code.
4. If there are inconsistencies with the table of contents and the chapter headings, use the table of contents.
5. If there is confusion with the preamble, look to the first subsection or text that has the following: “[the party] will...”.
6. If the topic relates to young people/youth leaving the province, or trying to get young people/youth to stay in the province, code based on the policy objective (e.g. higher education, youth employment).

1. Macroeconomics

- 100: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general domestic macroeconomic policy, including general diversification.
- 101: Interest Rates
 - Description: Includes issues related to inflation, cost of living, prices, and interest rates
- 103: Unemployment Rate
 - Description: Includes issues related to the unemployment rate, impact of unemployment
- 104: Monetary Policy
 - Description: Includes issues related to the monetary policy, central bank, and the treasury
- 105: National Budget
 - Description: Issues related to public debt, budgeting, and efforts to reduce deficits
- 107: Tax Code
 - Description: Includes issues related to tax policy, the impact of taxes, tax enforcement and royalties.
- 108: Industrial Policy
 - Description: Includes issues related to manufacturing policy, industrial revitalization, and growth
- 109: Primary Industry
 - Description: mining, any other primary industry not covered under another subheading. Therefore this category excludes: agriculture, fishing, forestry and oil and gas

- 110: Price Control
 - Description: Includes issues related to wage or price control, emergency price controls
- 199: Other
 - Description: Includes issues related to other macroeconomics subtopics

2. Civil Rights

- 200: General
 - Description: Includes issues related generally to civil rights and minority rights
- 201: Minority Discrimination
 - Description: Includes issues related to minority, ethnic, and racial group discrimination
- 202: Gender Discrimination
 - Description: Includes issues related to sex, gender, and sexual orientation discrimination
- 204: Age Discrimination
 - Description: Includes issues related to age discrimination, including mandatory retirement age policies
- 205: Handicap Discrimination
 - Description: Includes issues related to handicap and disease discrimination
- 206: Voting Rights
 - Description: Includes issues related to voting rights, expanding or contracting the franchise, participation and related issues
- 207: Freedom of Speech
 - Description: Issues related to freedom of speech, religious freedoms, and other types of freedom of expression
- 208: Right to Privacy
 - Description: Includes issues related to privacy rights, including privacy of records, access to government information, and abortion rights
- 209: Anti-Government
 - Description: Includes issues related to anti-government activity groups, such as the communist party and local insurgency groups
- 299: Other - Property rights
 - Description: Includes issues related to other civil rights subtopics

3. Health

- 300: General
 - Description: Includes issues related generally to health care, including appropriations for general health care government agencies
- 301: Health Care Reform
 - Description: Includes issues related to broad, comprehensive changes in the health care system
- 302: Insurance
 - Description: Includes issues related to health insurance reform, regulation, availability, and cost

- 321: Drug Industry
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation and promotion of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and clinical labs
- 322: Medical Facilities
 - Description: Issues related to facilities construction, regulation and payments, including waitlists and ambulance services
- 323: Insurance Providers
 - Description: Includes issues related to provider and insurer payments and regulation, including other types of benefits or multiple benefits
- 324: Medical Liability
 - Description: Includes issues related to medical liability, malpractice issues, medical fraud and abuse, and unfair practices
- 325: Manpower
 - Description: Issues related to the supply and quantity of labour in the health care industry, training and licensing
- 331: Disease Prevention
 - Description: Issues related to disease prevention, treatment, and health promotion, including specific diseases not covered in other subtopics
- 332: Infants and Children
 - Description: Includes issues related to infants and children, including coverage and quality of care, health promotion, and school health programs
- 333: Mental
 - Description: Includes issues related to mental health care and mental health disease
- 334: Long-term Care
 - Description: Includes issues related to long term care, home health care, senior's health care, the terminally ill, and rehabilitation services
- 335: Drug Coverage and Cost
 - Description: Includes issues related to prescription drug coverage, programs to pay for prescription drugs, and policy to reduce the cost of prescription drugs
- 341: Tobacco Abuse
 - Description: Includes issues related to tobacco abuse, treatment, education, and health effects
- 342: Drug and Alcohol Abuse
 - Description: Includes issues related to alcohol and illegal drug abuse, treatment, education, and health effects
- 398: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to health care research and development
- 399: Other - Rural health care
 - Description: Includes issues related to other health care topics

4. Agriculture

- 400: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general agriculture policy, including appropriations for general agriculture government agencies

- 401: Trade
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation and impact of agricultural foreign trade
- 402: Subsidies to Farmers
 - Description: Includes issues related to government subsidies to farmers and ranchers, including agricultural disaster insurance
- 403: Food Inspection & Safety
 - Description: Includes issues related to food inspection and safety, including seafood, and labeling requirements
- 404: Marketing & Promotion
 - Description: Includes issues related to efforts to provide information on agricultural products to consumers and the regulation of agricultural marketing
- 405: Animal and Crop Disease
 - Description: Includes issues related to animal and crop disease, pest control and pesticide regulation, and welfare for domesticated animals
- 408: Fisheries & Fishing
 - Description: Includes issues related to fishing, commercial fishery regulation and conservation
- 410: Forestry
 - Description: includes issues related to the forestry sector, tax incentives and subsidies to the forestry sector
- 498: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to agricultural research and development
- 499: Other - Supply management?
 - Description: Includes issues related to other agricultural subtopics

5. Labour

- 500: General
 - Description: Includes issues generally related to labour, employment, and pensions, including appropriations for government agencies regulating labour policy
- 501: Worker Safety
 - Description: Includes issues related to worker safety and protection and compensation for work-related injury and disease
- 502: Employment Training
 - Description: Includes issues related to job training for adult workers, workforce development, and efforts to retrain displaced workers
- 503: Employee Benefits
 - Description: Includes issues related to all employee benefits, pensions, and retirement accounts, including government-provided unemployment insurance
- 504: Labour Unions
 - Description: Includes issues related to labour unions, collective bargaining, and employer-employee relations
- 505: Fair Labour Standards
 - Description: Includes issues related to fair labour standards such as the minimum wage and overtime compensation, and labour law

- 506: Youth Employment
 - Description: Includes issues related to youth employment, child labour and job training for youths
- 529: Migrant and Seasonal
 - Description: Includes issues related to migrant, guest and seasonal workers
- 599: Other - Jobs and job creation
 - Description: Issues related to other labour policy

6. Education

- 600: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general education policy, including appropriations for government agencies regulating education policy
- 601: Higher
 - Description: Includes issues related to higher education, student loans and education finance, and the regulation of colleges and universities
- 602: Elementary & Secondary
 - Description: Includes issues related to elementary and primary schools, school reform, safety in schools, and efforts to generally improve educational standards and outcomes
- 603: Underprivileged
 - Description: Includes issues related to education of underprivileged students, including adult literacy programs, bilingual education needs, and rural education initiatives
- 604: Vocational
 - Description: Includes issues related to vocational education for children and adults and their impact
- 606: Special
 - Description: Includes issues related to special education and education for the physically or mentally handicapped
- 607: Excellence
 - Description: Includes issues related to education excellence, including efforts to increase the quality of specific areas, such as math, science or foreign language skills
- 698: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to research and development in education
- 699: Other - school choice (parental involvement)
 - Description: Includes issues related to other subtopics in education policy

7. Environment

- 700: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general environmental policy, including appropriations for government agencies regulating environmental policy
- 701: Drinking Water
 - Description: Includes issues related to domestic drinking water safety, supply, pollution, fluoridation, and conservation
- 703: Waste Disposal

- Description: Includes issues related to the disposal and treatment of wastewater, solid waste and runoff.
- 704: Hazardous Waste
 - Description: Includes issues related to hazardous waste and toxic chemical regulation, treatment, and disposal
- 705: Air Pollution
 - Description: Includes issues related to air pollution, climate change, and noise pollution
- 707: Recycling
 - Description: Includes issues related to recycling, reuse, and resource conservation
- 708: Indoor Hazards
 - Description: Includes issues related to indoor environmental hazards, indoor air contamination (including on airlines), and indoor hazardous substances such as asbestos
- 709: Species & Forest
 - Description: Includes issues related to species and forest protection, endangered species, control of the domestic illicit trade in wildlife products, and regulation of laboratory or performance animals
- 711: Conservation
 - Description: Includes issues related to land and water conservation
- 798: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to research and development in environmental technology, not including alternative energy
- 799: Other - Environmental school project
 - Description: Includes issues related to other environmental subtopics

8. Energy

- 800: General
 - Description: Includes issues generally related to energy policy, including appropriations for government agencies regulating energy policy
- 801: Nuclear
 - Description: Includes issues related to nuclear energy, safety and security, and disposal of nuclear waste
- 802: Electricity
 - Description: Includes issues related to general electricity, hydropower, and regulation of electrical utilities
- 803: Natural Gas & Oil
 - Description: Includes issues related to natural gas and oil, drilling, oil spills and flaring, oil and gas prices, shortages, and gasoline regulation
- 805: Coal
 - Description: Includes issues related to coal production, use, trade, and regulation, including coal gasification and clean coal technologies
- 806: Alternative & Renewable
 - Description: Includes issues related to alternative and renewable energy, biofuels, hydrogen, and geothermal power
- 807: Conservation

- Description: Includes issues related to energy conservation and energy efficiency, including vehicles, homes, commercial use, and government
- 898: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to energy research and development
- 899: Other - Publicly owned utility companies
 - Description: Includes issues related to other energy subtopics

9. Immigration

- 900: Immigration
 - Description: Includes issues related to immigration, refugees, and citizenship

10. Transportation

- 1000: General
 - Description: Includes issues related generally to transportation, including appropriations for government agencies regulating transportation policy
- 1001: Mass
 - Description: Includes issues related to mass transportation construction, regulation, safety, and availability
- 1002: Highways
 - Description: Includes issues related to public highway construction, maintenance, and safety
- 1003: Air Travel
 - Description: Includes issues related to air travel, regulation and safety of aviation, airports, air traffic control, pilot training, and aviation technology
- 1005: Railroad Travel
 - Description: Includes issues related to railroads, rail travel, rail freight, and the development and deployment of new rail technologies
- 1007: Maritime
 - Description: Includes issues related to maritime transportation, including maritime freight and shipping, safety and security, and inland waterways and channels
- 1010: Infrastructure
 - Description: Includes issues related to infrastructure and public works, including employment initiatives
- 1098: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to transportation research and development
- 1099: Other
 - Description: Includes issues related to other transportation subtopics

12. Law and Crime

- 1200: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general law, crime, and family issues
- 1201: Agencies
 - Description: Includes issues related to all law enforcement agencies, including border, customs, and other specialized enforcement agencies and their appropriations

- 1202: White Collar Crime
 - Description: Includes issues related to white collar crime, organized crime, counterfeiting and fraud, cyber-crime, and money laundering
- 1203: Illegal Drugs
 - Description: Issues related to illegal drug crime and enforcement, criminal penalties for drug crimes, including international efforts to combat drug trafficking
- 1204: Court Administration
 - Description: Includes issues related to court administration, judiciary appropriations, guidelines for bail, pre-release, fines and legal representation
- 1205: Prisons
 - Description: Includes issues related to prisons and jails, parole systems, and appropriations
- 1206: Juvenile Crime
 - Description: Includes issues related to juvenile crime and justice, juvenile prisons and jails, and efforts to reduce juvenile crime and recidivism
- 1207: Child Abuse
 - Description: Includes issues related to child abuse, child pornography, sexual exploitation of children and parental kidnapping
- 1208: Family Issues
 - Description: Includes issues related to family issues, domestic violence, child welfare, family law
- 1210: Criminal & Civil Code
 - Description: Includes issues related to domestic criminal and civil codes, including crimes not mentioned in other subtopics
- 1211: Crime Control
 - Description: Includes issues related to the control, prevention, and impact of crime
- 1227: Police
 - Description: Includes issues related to Police and other general domestic security responses to terrorism, such as special police
- 1299: Other - sexual assault/ violence
 - Description: Includes issues related to other law, crime, and family subtopics

13. Social Welfare

- 1300: General
 - Description: Includes issues generally related to social welfare policy
- 1302: Low-Income Assistance
 - Description: Includes issues related to poverty assistance for low-income families, including food assistance programs, programs to assess or alleviate welfare dependency and tax credits directed at low income families
- 1303: Elderly Assistance
 - Description: Includes issues related to elderly issues and elderly assistance, including government pensions
- 1304: Disabled Assistance
 - Description: Includes issues related to aid for people with physical or mental disabilities

- 1305: Volunteer Associations
 - Description: Includes issues related to domestic volunteer associations, charities, and youth organizations
- 1308: Child Care
 - Description: Includes issues related to parental leave and child care
- 1399: Other - Women's centres/shelters
 - Description: Includes issues related to other social welfare policy subtopics

14. Housing

- 1400: General
 - Description: Includes issues related generally to housing and urban affairs
- 1401: Community Development
 - Description: Includes issues related to housing and community development including community centres and facilities, neighborhood development, and national housing policy.
- 1403: Urban Development
 - Description: Includes issues related to urban development and general urban issues
- 1404: Rural Housing
 - Description: Includes issues related to rural housing
- 1405: Rural Development
 - Description: Includes issues related to non-housing rural economic development
- 1406: Low-Income Assistance
 - Description: Includes issues related to housing for low-income individuals and families, including public housing projects and housing affordability programs
- 1407: Veterans
 - Description: Includes issues related to housing for military veterans and their families, including subsidies for veterans
- 1408: Elderly
 - Description: Includes issues related to housing for the elderly, including housing facilities for the handicapped elderly
- 1409: Homeless
 - Description: Includes issues related to housing for the homeless and efforts to reduce homelessness
- 1498: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to housing and community development research and development
- 1499: Other – Rent
 - Description: Other issues related to housing and community development

15. Domestic Commerce

- 1500: General
 - Description: Includes issues generally related to domestic commerce, including appropriations for government agencies regulating domestic commerce
- 1501: Banking

- Description: Includes issues related to the regulation of national banking systems and other non-bank financial institutions
- 1502: Securities & Commodities
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation and facilitation of securities and commodities trading, regulation of investments and related industries, and exchanges
- 1504: Consumer Finance
 - Description: Includes issues related to consumer finance, mortgages, credit cards, access to credit records, and consumer credit fraud
- 1505: Insurance Regulation
 - Description: Includes issues related to insurance regulation, fraud and abuse in the insurance industry, the financial health of the insurance industry, and insurance availability and cost
- 1507: Bankruptcy
 - Description: Includes issues related to personal, commercial, and municipal bankruptcies
- 1520: Corporate Management
 - Description: Includes issues related to corporate mergers, antitrust regulation, corporate accounting and governance, and corporate management
- 1521: Small Businesses
 - Description: Includes issues related to small businesses, including programs to promote and subsidize small businesses
- 1522: Copyrights and Patents
 - Description: Includes issues related to copyrights and patents, patent reform, and intellectual property
- 1523: Disaster Relief
 - Description: Includes issues related to domestic natural disaster relief, disaster or flood insurance, and natural disaster preparedness
- 1524: Tourism
 - Description: Issues related to tourism regulation, promotion, and impact
- 1525: Consumer Safety
 - Description: Includes issues related to consumer fraud, consumer protection and safety in domestic commerce
- 1526: Sports Regulation
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation and promotion of sports, gambling, and personal fitness
- 1598: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to domestic commerce research and development
- 1599: Other - Private liquor stores
 - Description: Includes issues related to other domestic commerce policy subtopics

16. Defense

- 1600: General
 - Description: Includes issues related generally to defense policy, and appropriations for agencies that oversee general defense policy

- 1602: Alliances
 - Description: Includes issues related to defense alliance and agreement, security assistance, and UN peacekeeping activities
- 1603: Intelligence
 - Description: Includes issues related to military intelligence, espionage, and covert operations
- 1604: Readiness
 - Description: Includes issues related to military readiness, coordination of armed services air support and sealift capabilities, and national stockpiles of strategic materials.
- 1605: Nuclear Arms
 - Description: Includes issues related to nuclear weapons, nuclear proliferation, modernization of nuclear equipment
- 1606: Military Aid
 - Description: Includes issues related to military aid to other countries and the control of arms sales to other countries
- 1608: Personnel Issues
 - Description: Includes issues related to military manpower, military personnel, military courts, and general veterans' issues
- 1610: Procurement
 - Description: Includes issues related to military procurement, conversion of old equipment, and weapons systems evaluation
- 1611: Installations & Land
 - Description: Includes issues related to military installations, construction, and land transfers
- 1612: Reserve Forces
 - Description: Issues related to military reserves and reserve affairs
- 1614: Hazardous Waste
 - Description: Includes issues related to military nuclear and hazardous waste disposal and military environmental compliance
- 1615: Civil
 - Description: Includes issues related to domestic civil defense, national security responses to terrorism, and other issues related to homeland security
- 1616: Civilian Personnel
 - Description: Includes issues related to non-contractor civilian personnel, civilian employment in the defense industry, and military base closings
- 1617: Contractors
 - Description: Includes issues related to military contractors and contracting, oversight of military contractors and fraud by military contractors
- 1619: Foreign Operations
 - Description: Includes issues related to direct war-related foreign military operations, prisoners of war and collateral damage to civilian populations
- 1620: Claims against Military
 - Description: Includes issues related to claims against the military, settlements for military dependents, and compensation for civilians injured in military operations

- 1698: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to defense research and development
- 1699: Other - Honouring veterans
 - Description: Includes issues related to other defense policy subtopics

17. Technology

- 1700: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general space, science, technology, and communications
- 1701: Space
 - Description: Includes issues related to the government use of space and space resource exploitation agreements, government space programs and space exploration, military use of space
- 1704: Commercial Use of Space
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation and promotion of commercial use of space, commercial satellite technology, and government efforts to encourage commercial space development
- 1705: Science Transfer
 - Description: Includes issues related to science and technology transfer and international science cooperation
- 1706: Telecommunications
 - Description: Includes issues related to telephone and telecommunication regulation, infrastructure for high speed internet, and other forms of telecommunication
- 1707: Broadcast
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation of the newspaper, publishing, radio, and broadcast television industries
- 1708: Weather Forecasting
 - Description: Includes issues related to weather forecasting, oceanography, geological surveys, and weather forecasting research and technology
- 1709: Computers
 - Description: Includes issues related generally to the computer industry, regulation of the internet, and computer security
- 1798: R&D
 - Description: Includes issues related to space, science, technology, and communication research and development not mentioned in other subtopics.
- 1799: Other
 - Description: Includes issues related to other space, science, technology, and communication research and development

18. Foreign Trade

- 1800: General
 - Description: Includes issues generally related to foreign trade and appropriations for government agencies generally regulating foreign trade
- 1802: Trade Agreements

- Description: Includes issues related to trade negotiations, disputes, and agreements, including tax treaties
- 1803: Exports
 - Description: Includes issues related to export regulation, subsidies, promotion, and control
- 1804: Private Investments
 - Description: Includes issues related to international private business investment and corporate development
- 1806: Competitiveness - interprovincial trade
 - Description: Includes issues related to productivity of competitiveness of domestic businesses and balance of payments issues
- 1807: Tariff & Imports
 - Description: Includes issues related to tariffs and other barriers to imports, import regulation and impact of imports on domestic industries
- 1808: Exchange Rates
 - Description: Includes issues related to exchange rate and related issues
- 1899: Other
 - Description: Includes issues related to other foreign trade policy subtopics

19. International Affairs

- 1900: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general international affairs and foreign aid, including appropriations for general government foreign affairs agencies
- 1901: Foreign Aid
 - Description: Includes issues related to foreign aid not directly targeting at increasing international development
- 1902: Resources Exploitation
 - Description: Includes issues related to international resources exploitation and resources agreements, law of the sea and international ocean conservation efforts
- 1905: Developing Countries
 - Description: Includes issues related specifically to developing countries.
- 1906: International Finance
 - Description: Includes issues related to international finance and economic development, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, regional development banks, sovereign debt, and implications for international lending institutions
- 1910: Western Europe
 - Description: Includes issues related to Western Europe and the European Union
- 1921: Specific Country
 - Description: Includes issues related specifically to a foreign country or region not codable using other codes, assessment of political issues in other countries, relations between individual countries
- 1925: Human Rights
 - Description: Includes issues related to human rights, human rights violations, human rights treaties and conventions, UN reports on human rights, crimes associated with genocide or crimes against humanity

- 1926: Organizations
 - Description: International organizations, NGOs, the United Nations, International Red Cross, UNESCO, International Olympic Committee, International Criminal Court
- 1927: Terrorism
 - Description: Includes issues related to international terrorism, hijacking, and acts of piracy in other countries, efforts to fight international terrorism, international legal mechanisms to combat terrorism
- 1929: Diplomats
 - Description: Includes issues related to diplomats, diplomacy, embassies, citizens abroad, foreign diplomats in the country, visas and passports
- 1999: Other
 - Description: Includes issues related to other international affairs policy subtopics

20. Government Operations

- 2000: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general government operations, including appropriations for multiple government agencies
- 2001: Intergovernmental Relations
 - Description: Includes issues related to intergovernmental relations, local government issues
- 2002: Bureaucracy
 - Description: Includes issues related to general government efficiencies and bureaucratic oversight and reducing regulations and red tape
- 2003: Postal Service
 - Description: Includes issues related to postal services, regulation of mail, and post civil service
- 2004: Employees
 - Description: Includes issues related to civil employees not mentioned in other subtopics, government pensions and general civil service issues
- 2005: Appointments
 - Description: Includes issues related to nominations and appointments not mentioned elsewhere
- 2006: Currency
 - Description: Includes issues related the currency, national mints, medals, and commemorative coins
- 2007: Procurement & Contractors
 - Description: Includes issues related to government procurement, government contractors, contractor and procurement fraud, and procurement processes and systems
- 2008: Property Management
 - Description: Includes issues related to government property management, construction, and regulation
- 2009: Tax Administration
 - Description: Includes issues related to tax administration, enforcement, and auditing for both individuals and corporations

- 2010: Scandals
 - Description: Includes issues related to public scandal and impeachment
- 2011: Branch Relations
 - Description: Includes issues related to government branch relations, administrative issues, and constitutional reforms
- 2012: Political Campaigns
 - Description: Includes issues related to the regulation of political campaigns, campaign finance, political advertising, and voter registration
- 2013: Census & Statistics
 - Description: Includes issues related to census and statistics collection by government
- 2014: Capital City
 - Description: Includes issues related to the capital city
- 2015: Claims against
 - Description: Includes issues related to claims against the government, compensation for the victims of terrorist attacks, compensation policies without other substantive provisions
- 2030: National Holidays
 - Description: Includes issues related to national holidays and their observation
- 2099: Other - legislative reform
 - Description: Includes issues related to other government operations subtopics

21. Public Lands

- 2100: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general public lands, water management, and territorial issues
- 2101: National Parks
 - Description: Includes issues related to national parks, memorials, historic sites, and recreation, including the management and staffing of cultural sites
- 2102: Indigenous Affairs
 - Description: Includes issues related to indigenous affairs, indigenous lands, and assistance to indigenous people
- 2103: Public Lands
 - Description: Includes issues related to natural resources, public lands, and forest management, including forest fires, livestock grazing
- 2104: Water Resources
 - Description: Includes issues related to water resources, water resource development and civil works, flood control, and research
- 2105: Dependencies & Territories
 - Description: Includes issues related to territorial and dependency issues and devolution
- 2199: Other
 - Description: Includes issues related to other public lands policy subtopics

23. Culture

- 2300: General
 - Description: Includes issues related to general cultural policy issues
- 24. Regional Politics
 - 2400: General
 - 2402: Northern

Appendix B. Provincial Parties' Consistency Levels by Status

In government both		
<p>Consistent: BC LIB 13-17 (same leader) AB PC 04-08 (different leader) ON LIB 07-11 (same leader) ON LIB 14-18 (same leader)</p>	<p>Somewhat: BC LIB 05-09 (same leader) BC LIB 09-13 (different leader) AB PC 08-12 (different leader) MB NDP 03-07 (same leader) MB NDP 07-11 (different leader) ON LIB 11-14 (different leader) NS PC 03-06 (different leader) NS PC 06-09 (same leader) NB PC 03-06 (same leader) PEI LIB 15-19 (same leader) SK NDP 03-07 (same leader)</p>	<p>Inconsistent: SK PTY 11-16 (same leader) MB NDP 11-16 (same leader) NL PC 07-11 (different leader) PEI LIB 11-15 (different leader) AB PC 12-15 (different leader) NL PC 11-15 (different leader)</p>
In opposition both		
<p>Consistent: AB NDP 04-08 (same leader) AB LIB 08-12 (different leader) MB PC 03-07 (different leader) MB PC 07-11 (same leader) MB PC 11-16 (different leader) ON NDP 07-11 (different leader) NS NDP 03-06 (same leader)</p>	<p>Somewhat: BC NDP 05-09 (same leader) BC NDP 09-13 (different leader) BC NDP 13-17 (different leader) AB NDP 08-12 (same leader) AB NDP 12-15 (different leader) AB LIB 04-08 (same leader) AB LIB 12-15 (different leader) SK NDP 11-16 (different leader) ON NDP 11-14 (same leader) ON PC 07-11 (different leader) ON PC 11-14 (same leader) ON PC 14-18 (different leader) NS NDP 06-09 (same leader) NS LIB 09-13 (same leader) NS PC 13-17 (same leader) NB LIB 03-06 (same leader) PEI PC 15-19 (different leader) PEI GRN 11-15 (different leader) PEI GRN 15-19 (same leader)</p>	<p>Inconsistent: AB LIB 15-19 (different leader) AB WR 08-12 (different leader) AB WR 12-15 (different leader) SK PTY 03-07 (different leader) ON NDP 03-07 (same leader) ON NDP 14-18 (same leader) NS LIB 03-06 (different leader) NS LIB 06-09 (different leader) NL LIB 07-11 (different leader) NL LIB 11-15 (different leader)</p>

In government then opposition		
<p>Consistent: MB NDP 16-19 (different leader) NB PC 14-18 (different leader)</p>	<p>Somewhat: NS NDP 13-17 (different leader) NS PC 09-13 (different leader) NL LIB 03-07 (different leader) NL PC 15-19 (different leader) SK NDP 07-11 (different leader)</p>	<p>Inconsistent: ON PC 03-07 (different leader) NB LIB 10-14 (different leader) NB PC 06-10 (different leader)</p>
In opposition then government		
<p>Consistent: ON LIB 03-07 (same leader) MB PC 16-19 (same leader) NS NDP 09-13 (same leader) NB PC 10-14 (same leader)</p>	<p>Somewhat: AB NDP 15-19 (same leader) NB LIB 06-10 (same leader) NL LIB 15-19 (same leader)</p>	<p>Inconsistent: SK PTY 07-11 (same leader) NS LIB 13-17 (same leader) NB LIB 14-18 (same leader) NL PC 03-07 (same leader)</p>