

Responding to Challenge:
An Analysis of the 2011 Alberta Progressive Conservative Leadership
Election

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The selection of Conservative party leaders in Alberta is of great consequence for the party and the political system. This is, of course, not simply an Albertan phenomenon. As Punnett wrote “All party leaders influence voting behaviour, public attitudes and politics in general. Given the importance of party leaders, the processes through which they achieve office are worthy of note” (1992, 2). Indeed, research on British politics makes clear that “Party leadership is also the pathway to the premiership... To a great extent, party leadership contests are gatekeepers ... drastically narrowing the pool of potential prime ministers” (Stark, 1996, 2).

One of the reasons why leadership selection is particularly significant in Alberta is that it is especially important when the party choosing a leader is in government. As Kenig explains, “a new prime minister may be selected or nominated by the ruling party. In these circumstances, the decision concerning the highest office in the country is not even in the hands of the entire electorate” (2008, 241). Moreover, the Alberta situation is relatively unique in that it is one of the rare one-party dominant systems (see Stewart and Carty, 2006 and Sartori, 1976). This means that decisions regarding the leadership of the Conservative party interest and affect the entire population in a manner different from other party primaries in Canada. The Alberta Conservatives have governed the province since 1971 and have now used the primary model to successfully transfer their leadership three times. No other party in Canada has demonstrated such a level of success either in leadership transfers or in elections.

Some of the pioneering work on primaries in the United States noted the importance of one-party dominance in the emergence of this mechanism for nomination. Jewell, for instance, suggests that “the development of the direct primary is related to one party dominance at the state and local levels, the primary seems to have been as much a cause as an effect of one-party control” (1984:5). The primary model then seems well suited to the Alberta Conservative situation.

Carty and Blake (1999) described the Alberta Conservative model as an open primary and it is by far the most open model used in the country. This primary provides an opportunity for all citizens over the age of 16 to vote in their own constituency. There

is no advance requirement for membership as individuals can pay the nominal \$5.00 membership at the polling station and vote immediately. Since the primary requires the winner to secure the support of 50% +1 of those voting, Alberta's Conservatives have put in place a process which calls for a run-off ballot a week or two later. In each of the run-off ballots there has been a dramatic increase in the number of participants and the first ballot leader has been defeated. As on the first ballot, people can decide to purchase their memberships at the polling station and vote with the result that the run-off ballots can enfranchise a much different electorate. Work by Stewart and Sayers (2009) on the 2006 Conservative primary demonstrated that this model was very effective in generating participation and also demoralizing for the other parties that contest elections.

Placing the Alberta Conservative model in the context of broader research on party primaries reveals its distinctive nature. Cross and Blais's investigation of the introduction of all member votes revealed that "parties will only make the change when in opposition and after an electoral setback" (2012, 135). In Alberta, for obvious reasons, the primary model was chosen while the party was in government. Cross and Blais also found that there is "a reluctance by parties in government to have an open, and potentially divisive contest" (2012: 116) and yet, as discussed above, the Alberta Conservatives use a very open and transparent model.

The openness is demonstrated by the absence of a cut-off point for membership as almost every other primary model requires membership to be purchased before the day of the vote. The potentially divisive nature of the contest is indicated by the defeat of first ballot leaders. This competitiveness deviates from the international evidence on competition and front runners. As Kenig explained "Voters in inclusive selectorates (party primaries) are more exposed to the influence of opinion polls that reflect the support for candidates. If such polls indicate an early front-runner, undecided voters tend to 'get on board the winning wagon' and transfer their support to the likely winner. This 'front runner effect' enhances the probability for a candidate to gather considerable support and therefore reduces competitiveness" (2008, 242).

Finally, international research on party primaries suggest that policy concerns are often not relevant to the outcome and that is rare for a woman to win the leadership in a primary. Once again the Alberta case stands out as policy issues have been relevant (see Stewart and Archer, 2000 and Stewart and Sayers, 2009) and in 2011 the leadership was won by a woman.

Party primaries of one sort or another are becoming increasingly common as a mechanism for choosing party leaders. Scarrow and Gezgor (2010) note the increasing use of party member votes to choose leaders while Kenig (2009) and Cross and Blais (2012) demonstrate the growth in primaries throughout the democratic world. The rules and results of the Alberta model are thus of interest not only to Albertans, but to those interested in leadership selection more broadly.

The 2011 Conservative primary offers a rare and valuable opportunity to analyse leadership selection in a dominant party when it is challenged. This paper examines the 2011 Alberta Conservative primary looking first at participation and discussing the downturn in participation from 2006. We then look at the regional nature of the vote, differences in support based on partisan control of the constituency and the

impact of candidate endorsements. We also look at some correlations between candidate support and the broader demographic characteristics of the constituency. We begin with a quick discussion of the 2011 context and results.¹

Conservative Primary 2011

The Conservative primary in 2011 took place in rather different circumstances than the 2006 choice. Although the Conservatives won an increased majority in the 2008 election, a serious threat had emerged to challenge the Conservatives on their right flank and pundits were talking seriously about political change in the province. Under Ed Stelmach the Conservatives introduced changes to the province's energy royalties regime which deeply angered many in the energy industry. Capitalizing on Conservative unpopularity in the Calgary energy industry, the right wing Wildrose Alliance critiqued the Conservative party's royalty plans and saw funds flow into its coffers. Although the party was unable to win a seat in the 2008 general election, a year later, in the midst of an engaging leadership election, it won a by-election in Calgary. The party focused its campaign on sending "Ed" a message and came from a distant third place position in the 2008 general election to outpoll both the Conservatives and the Liberals (O'Neill and Walton, *Globe and Mail*, September 16, 2009). Apparently, Calgarians were not ready to use the Liberals to send "Ed" a message and during the campaign the government was criticized for its management of the royalty issue as well as its burgeoning deficit (*CBC Calgary News*, September 14, 2009). The by-election victory combined with the subsequent leadership victory of Danielle Smith, a prominent Calgarian with an extensive media background, breathed new life into the party. As one pollster put it, "Now Alberta Politics will get really interesting to watch". He also suggested that the "by-election is significant because it gives life to a "real threat" – a more conservative party and could trigger a shift away from the Tories" (O'Neill and Walton, *Globe and Mail*, September 16, 2009).

The Wildrose party attempted to moderate some of its policies and move away from its social conservative roots to focus on fiscal conservatism. Smith spoke effectively about the Tories losing their way and the need to respect the needs of the energy industry. The economic downturn and decline in natural resource revenue shifted the province back into a deficit situation for the first time since the Getty era and the early years of the Klein government. Three Conservative MLAs crossed the floor to join the lone elected member providing Wildrose with even more momentum. With the Stelmach government unwilling to make major cuts to programs in order to balance the budget, the Conservatives appeared vulnerable on fiscal issues, a vulnerability that saw controversy surround the 2011 budget process culminating in the resignation of the finance minister and the decision by Premier Stelmach to step down (see Sayers and Stewart, 2011 for a discussion of the Wildrose threat to the Conservatives). The search for Stelmach's replacement thus took place in an environment in which Conservative dominance was in question and with another party challenging for the party's more right wing supporters.

¹ The Conservative party releases voting figures for each candidate in each constituency and this data provides the basis for the analysis in the paper. As well, the Alberta government provides census data for each provincial constituency which enables us to look at different riding characteristics and correlate these characteristics with candidate support.

In this newly competitive environment six candidates sought the Conservative leadership. The perceived front runner, and leader in media polls was Gary Mar a “49-year-old Chinese Canadian lawyer” who served in the legislature from 1993-1997 holding a variety of prominent positions in Ralph Klein’s cabinets including Health and the Environment (Henton, *Calgary Herald*, September 9, 2011). Mar had gone on to serve as Alberta’s representative in Washington and was from Calgary. Mar was seen as the choice of the Conservative establishment and was backed by more than two dozen of the 67 Conservative MLAs.

Ted Morton, a political science professor from Calgary, was also a candidate. Morton had run in the 2006 leadership election finishing second on the first ballot and supporting eventual winner Ed Stelmach on the third. Morton had held prominent cabinet positions in Stelmach’s cabinet, including the role of provincial treasurer, and his resignation from cabinet, purportedly over concerns about the speed of deficit reduction, had been one of the factors supposedly underlying Stelmach’s decision to relinquish the leadership (see Pennings, *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 2011, Flanagan 2011 and Henton, *Calgary Herald*, December 30, 2011). Morton was seen as a candidate from the right wing and indeed, when he sought the Conservative leadership in 2006 he was endorsed by the then leader of the Alliance party who was now the Wildrose House leader. He was seen as the candidate whose “victory could slow- or stop- Wildrose” (Harper, *The Hill Times*, September 19, 2011) and bring its supporters back into the Conservative camp. Ten MLAs endorsed Morton’s leadership campaign.

Other candidates included Alison Redford from Calgary who was elected as a Conservative in the 2008 election and served as Justice Minister under Stelmach. Redford was a human rights lawyer whose background included work with the former federal Progressive Conservatives. She was endorsed by one other MLA. Doug Horner, the MLA from Spruce Grove - Sturgeon - St. Alberta also entered the contest. Horner had been a key supporter of Ed Stelmach in the 2006 primary and held a number of high profile positions in subsequent cabinets. He garnered the support of 16 of his fellow MLAs. A somewhat surprising entrant was Rick Orman from Calgary who had served in Don Getty’s cabinet and had actually finished third in the 1992 primary won by Ralph Klein. Rounding out the field was Doug Griffiths a relatively young junior cabinet minister from the central Alberta riding of Battle River-Wainwright.

The campaign was conducted throughout the summer months raising concerns about the ability to attract to public attention. Mar raised some controversy by bringing the prospect of private delivery of health care into the debate, an initiative that was strongly opposed by Redford. The *Calgary Herald* which endorsed Mar suggested that “he was the only candidate courageous enough to bring up the dreaded P-word (private) with regard to healthcare reform in Alberta” (Gary Mar is best choice for premier”, *Calgary Herald*, September 16, 2011). Redford presented herself as a defender of public health care, a position particularly attractive to public sector workers as was her promise to increase school funding in the province (Flanagan, 2011). Redford portrayed herself as the candidate of change and made clear her willingness to “reverse unpopular policies” (Pratt, *Edmonton Journal*, October 9, 2011; Thomson, *Edmonton Journal*, September 20, 2011). Flanagan suggests that “she distinguished herself from the crowded field of six by being the most willing to

criticize policies adopted by Stelmach’s government” (2011, 18). Her lack of caucus support may well have helped her positioning in this area.

Mar’s status as front runner was confirmed by the eventual release of revenue and expenditure figures for the campaign. Mar raised and spent about twice as much as any other contender and indeed his expenditures exceeded the combined spending of the candidates who ranked second and third on the first ballot. Mar was clearly seen as the choice of the Conservative establishment with Morton’s campaign manager stating “It’s the same old, old boys’ club around Gary that’s been there forever. If this party is going to prosper and renew and go anywhere in the next decade, that group of people needed to be pushed out” (as quoted in Thomson, *Edmonton Journal*, September 22, 2011).

Table 1: Campaign Revenue and Expenditures

	Revenue	Expenditure
Mar	\$2,425,056	\$2,687,715
Redford	\$1,211,421	\$1,290,575
Horner	\$1,239,442	\$1,231,383
Morton	\$1,092,970	\$977,238

Morton, Orman and Griffiths were seen as the more right wing candidates in the race with media coverage suggesting that “the right wing was repudiated with Ted Morton and Rick Orman going down to defeat on the first ballot” (Pratt, *Edmonton Journal*, October 9, 2011; see also Thomson, *Edmonton Journal*, September 20, 2011 and Pennings, *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 2011). Wildrose leader Danielle Smith quickly moved to capitalize on this outcome stating “I would have expected at least one of the blue Tories to make it through to the final ballot... But they didn’t, and that gives Albertans a clear choice in the next election” (as quoted in Braid, *Calgary Herald*, September 19, 2011).

On first impressions, the participation in the Conservative primary is impressive. Almost 60,000 Albertans voted on the first ballot and 78,176 voted in the run-off election held two weeks later (see Table 2). To put this in context, the number of voters in the national NDP primary held a few months later was below 65,000. The number of participants was however a disappointment for the Conservatives as it was substantially lower than 2006 when the first ballot voters numbered almost 100,000 and the run-off involved over 144,000 Albertans. Media coverage drew attention to this decline suggesting that the party was not as attractive to Albertans as it had been in 2006 and indicating that this was an early warning sign of the prospect of political change (see for example, Pennings, *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 2011). With the emergence of the Wildrose challenge it was perhaps inevitable that participation in the primary would decline. American research has shown that “the stronger the majority party, the more primary voting is concentrated in that party” (Jewell, 1984:281). The party’s decision to conduct the campaign throughout the summer with a vote in September may have also contributed to a campaign that did not generate much attention in its early stages.

The 2012 primary also differed from the 2006 election with respect to competitiveness. The first ballot results were much more one-sided and the first ballot leader, Gary Mar attracted over 40% of the vote and won plurality support in the majority of constituencies.² Indeed, Mar attracted more than twice the support of second place candidate Alison Redford. The third place candidate, Doug Horner, another former Stelmach minister, attracted about 15% of the vote, a share roughly comparable to that won by Stelmach in 2006 when he went on to victory. Perhaps the most dramatic story of the first ballot was the inability of Morton to make the run-off. In 2006 Morton had garnered over 25,000 first ballot votes (and more than 40,000 on the second), more votes than Mar won in 2011, but this time Morton failed to gain even 7000 votes and was eliminated. Orman was slightly behind Morton, garnering almost 1700 votes in one riding alone, while Griffiths trailed the field (see Table 2).

Table 2 Primary Results 2011

	2011 1st Ballot	2011 2nd Ballot	2011 3rd Ballot
Gary Mar	24,195	33,233	35,491
Alison Redford	11,129	28,993	37,101
Doug Horner	8,635	15,590	
Ted Morton	6,962		
Rick Orman	6,005		
Doug Griffiths	2,435		
Total	59,361	77,816	72,592

Following the first ballot, the three eliminated candidates all endorsed Mar and given the size and breath of Mar’s lead many felt his victory on the second ballot was inevitable. One political scientist was quoted saying “I think it’s probably an insurmountable lead. Mar is too far ahead” and NDP leader Brian Mason added to this impression by launching an attack on Mar shortly after the first ballot (Gerein, *Edmonton Journal*, September 18, 2011 and Thomson, *Edmonton Journal*, September 22, 2011). Perhaps as a result of Mar’s huge lead, participation in the run-off election did not grow by nearly as much as it did in 2006 and the order of the three candidates was unchanged.

Despite the endorsements attracted by Mar, Redford managed to substantially close the gap on the second ballot as her vote increased by over 17,000 while Mar’s grew by only 11,000 even with an overall increase in the number of voters and his endorsement by candidates who had attracted more than 15,000 votes on the first ballot. Redford’s handling of her mother’s death in between the two ballots generated much respect for her strength and courage. As the *Calgary Herald* editorialized, “When her mother, Helen, 71, passed away during the last week of the campaign, Redford soldiered on, showing incredible composure and ability in debates during an obviously stressful and difficult time” (Alberta’s first woman leader promises change and stability, *Calgary Herald*, October 3, 2011).

² Before the vote took place Edmonton Journal political columnist Graham Thomson suggested that “The magic number for Mar is 40 per cent of the vote or better. If he can get that on the first ballot he’s likely untouchable and headed for a relatively easy victory on the second ballot” (*Edmonton Journal*, September 15, 2011).

The endorsement of the eliminated candidates appears to be of limited value for Mar. In the five ridings carried by Orman and Griffiths the number of voters declined on the second ballot while in the four won by Morton, the mean increase was only 74 votes. As Table 3 shows, the increase in the mean vote in ridings won by Horner and Redford on the first ballot is also substantially higher than the increase in the constituencies Mar carried. This may well confirm the possibility of at least a degree of complacency among Mar supporters.

Table 3 Mean Voter Increase by Riding Winner

First Ballot Winner	Mean Voter Increase
Redford	295.7500
Mar	237.8727
Horner	293.0714
Morton	74.0000
Orman	-94.5000
Griffiths	-91.0000

The breadth of Mar's lead also narrowed as he won pluralities in only 39 ridings compared to 52 on the first ballot (see Table 4). Redford tripled the number of ridings she carried while there was only a marginal increase in victories for Horner.

Table 4 Ridings won

	2011 1 st Ballot	2011 2 nd Ballot	2011 3 rd Ballot
Gary Mar	52	39	35
Alison Redford	9	27	48
Doug Horner	13	17	
Ted Morton	4		
Rick Orman	4		
Doug Griffiths	1		

Following the second ballot Redford made what appears in retrospect to be a brilliant strategic move by indicating that Horner would be her second choice for premier and although Horner declined to indicate a preference he did say "When you look at the policies, the platforms, the call for change, where we need to go with this province in the future, I think it's pretty obvious where you would find my second ballot" (as quoted in Guttormson and Wood, *Calgary Herald*, September 28, 2011). It was at least obvious to a plurality of his supporters with 46% of them choosing Redford with their second preference vote. Nonetheless, almost one Horner voter in 6 preferred Mar to Redford and 4 in 10 of Horner's voters were unwilling to support either of the leading candidates (see Table 4). Although Horner's vote grew by the smallest amount, less than 7000, the second preferences of his supporters would determine the outcome and they went disproportionately to Redford who won a narrow victory in

votes and a majority of ridings and became the first woman to serve as Conservative leader and premier of Alberta.

Table 5: Horner Vote Transfers on 3rd Ballot

Redford	7268	46%
Mar	2258	14%
Exit	6424	40%

Participation Decline:

The decline in participation from 2006 is obvious (Table 6) and three different factors are likely to have been at play. First, given the decline in Morton’s support, it seems likely that many of the more right wing Albertans who backed him in 2006 had voted with their feet and left the Conservative party. Morton’s role in a land rights controversy that left many Albertans feeling that “their lands would be taken away without compensation or recourse to the courts” likely also played a part as this was something much focused on by the Wildrose (Kleiss, *Edmonton Journal*, September 19, 2011; see also Sayers and Stewart 2011 for a discussion of the relevant legislation).³ Second, a perception that the race was over may have discouraged participation. Given the breadth and width of Mar’s lead it seems likely that voters might have assumed the race to be over and decided not to participate. This might well account for the limited growth enjoyed by Mar on the second. Mar was certainly aware of the possibility. As *Edmonton Journal* columnist Graham Thomson explained, headlines suggesting Mar’s inevitability gave rise to “a collective groan coming from Mar campaign headquarters. Mar is afraid that if his supporters think he’s unbeatable, they won’t bother to come out to vote on the second ballot on Oct. 1 (Thomson, *Edmonton Journal*, September 20, 2011. A third factor raised was the September date with Conservative cabinet minister Ray Danyluk maintaining that with the need to get the harvest in and prepare for winter “In rural Alberta, this is the worst possible time for an election” (as quoted in Gerein, *Edmonton Journal*, September 21, 2011).

Table 6: Participation 2006 and 2011

Election	First Ballot	Second Ballot
2006	97,690	144,286
2011	59,359	78,176

The overall numbers make clear the significance of the ‘Morton factor’ as his vote figure was barely a quarter of what it had been in 2006. Indeed, it looks like the Conservative ‘Big Tent’ lost much of its right wing (see Pennings, *Globe and Mail*, September 29, 2011). Morton attracted 18,652 fewer votes than he received on the first ballot in 2006 and almost 35,000 fewer votes than he won on the second ballot in 2006. Almost 60% of the decline in Conservative participation can be associated with

³ Morton’s campaign was not aided by media stories questioning whether he “broke the law by destroying documents and using government e-mail accounts under different names” (Wingrove, *Globe and Mail*, September 8, 2011).

the Morton loss of support. If he had simply turned out those who voted for him on the second ballot in 2006, Morton would have led Mar by more than 17,000 votes and the total vote would have exceeded 93,000, only a minimal decline from the previous primary. In 2006 Morton won pluralities in 21 ridings, but in 2011, despite having a much higher public profile, he garnered pluralities in just 4. Indicative of Morton's loss of support is his vote in his own riding of Foothills Rocky View. He received 291 votes in 2011 compared to 939 on the first ballot in 2006 and 1367 on the second ballot. To some degree then, the Conservative leadership race indicated that the party was going to face a serious challenge on the right.

It is also the case that the Conservative decline varied by region. On the first ballot turnout in Calgary and Edmonton was down by about 9000 from 2006 while in the rest of the province it dropped by more than 25,000 (Cuthbertson, *Calgary Herald*, September 29, 2011). The decline in participation grew wider on the second ballot and in Edmonton and Calgary was around 20,000 while in the rest of the province the decline was about 44,000.⁴

Presaging the 2012 general election outcome, the Conservative supporters were more likely to come from the two largest cities. In 2006 the voters from Calgary and Edmonton made up 45% of the second ballot electorate. In 2011 these cities accounted for 59% of the voters. Decline was sharpest in the southern and central regions of the province. In the southern ridings turnout was only 27% of what it had been in 2006 and in the central ridings it was only 37%. These areas contained almost all of the ridings won by Morton in 2006 as well as virtually all of the constituencies carried by Wildrose in the 2012 general election.

It is important to keep in mind that what is really different in 2011 is the turnout rather than the overall membership figures. Table 7 reports membership fees for each year since 2005 and we see a huge jump in fees in the two years in which primaries were held. Indeed, the revenue generated by membership fees in 2011 was almost identical to that generated in 2006. Either more individuals joined after the primary, which was held in September rather than December as it was in 2006, or many simply decided not to vote. Decisions not to vote may be related to a sense of inevitability of the outcome or to an unwillingness to say no when asked to join. Whatever the explanation, the PCs had no difficulty in getting people to join the party in 2011.

Table 7 Membership Fees by Year

2011	\$787,625
2010	\$17,886
2009	\$21,828
2008	\$79,980
2007	\$141,760
2006	\$779,986
2005	\$32,752

⁴ The decline is in relation to second ballot voters in 2006. There was a major increase over the first ballot.

The 2011 Conservative primary provided an indication of the changes taking place in Alberta politics more broadly. These changes relate specifically to a loss of Conservative support on the right and in the southern and central areas of the province. The openness of the Conservative process demonstrated these changes but may have also allowed the party to build an election strategy more tied to the new realities. Although many concerns were raised about the decline in voter participation comparative research suggests that a decline in participation does not always lead to electoral defeat. In Britain for instance, almost 250,000 fewer Conservatives voted in the primary which elected David Cameron than voted in the primary selecting his predecessor (see Denham and O'Hara , 2007). Cameron nonetheless went on to win the next election.

It is also important to place participation levels in context. Although many fewer voters participated in the Conservative leadership election of 2011, the number of first ballot voters was greater than the number who voted in all of the leadership elections held by opposition parties since 1992. In other words, it was hardly the case that voters were shunning the Conservative option. Indeed, the Conservative primary vote as a percentage of the vote won by the party in the previous election ranked third in a list of turnout for all primaries in Canada since 1992. Only the two previous Alberta Conservative primaries enfranchised a larger share of the party voters⁵ (Stewart and Young, 2012).

The Regional Vote in Alberta

Conservative leadership races reveal the regional divisions which affect provincial politics but are often below the surface in general elections. The 2012 provincial election proved exceptional as the outcome reflected the wider regional divisions.

We begin our look at the regional dimension by looking at the regional representation in the Conservative electorate more closely. Earlier we noted that the decline in participation was much greater in the southern and central regions and that Calgary and Edmonton made up a much greater share of the electorate than in 2006. Table 8 reveals this while also showing that the representation of the two largest cities is quite close to the percentage those cities have of the Alberta population, 59% versus 56%. Indeed, the large urban representation appears more reflective of the general population than was the 2006 electorate.

Regional differences could also be observed in the vote. A look at the ridings *won*⁶ by each candidate illustrates this as we see substantial evidence of localized appeal. Looking first at the candidates eliminated on the first ballot we see that they had little cross regional appeal. Three of the ridings won by Orman were in his home town of Calgary and he added one central riding bordering the city to the total. Griffiths was able to carry his home riding in the central region but won no where else. Mortons's

⁵ This is calculated by dividing the number of primary voters into the number of votes won by the party in the previous election. It is certainly possible and indeed likely that many of the primary voters may have voted for another party or abstained in the previous election.

⁶ For ease of description we use the term 'won' to describe the candidate who received the most votes in a constituency.

victories were in the central and southern regions and he was not able to win a plurality in Calgary, Edmonton or the Northern regions.

Table 8: Regional Composition of the Selectorate

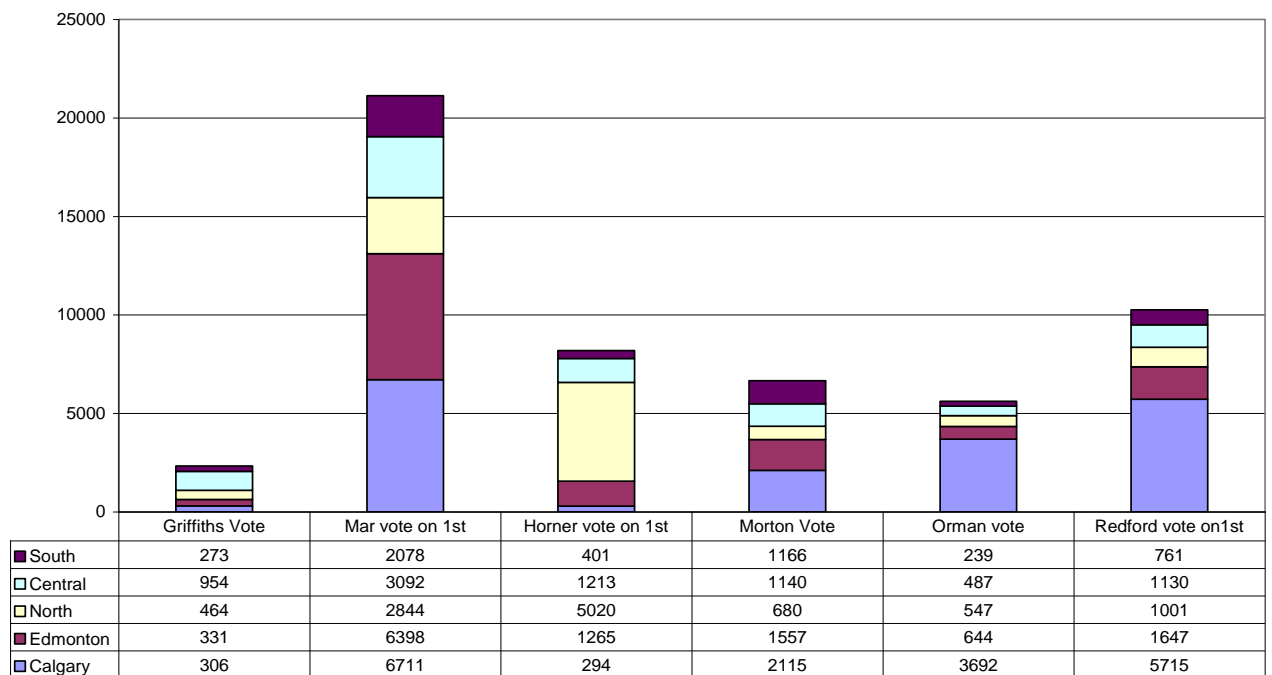
	2006 2 nd Ballot	2011 Census	2011 2 nd Ballot
Calgary	26%	30%	35%
Edmonton	19	26	24
North	22		22
Central	19		13
South	13		6.5

Regional elements were also present for Horner and Redford. All of the ridings won by Redford were in her home city of Calgary, while Horner won 12 of the 17 ridings in northern Alberta. Mar enjoyed wide support throughout the province, failing to win a plurality of ridings only in the North. He was particularly successful in Edmonton where he won all 18 ridings.

Figure 1 shows the popular vote won by the various candidates in each region and reinforces the regional nature of the race.

Figure 1

Vote by Region 1st Ballot

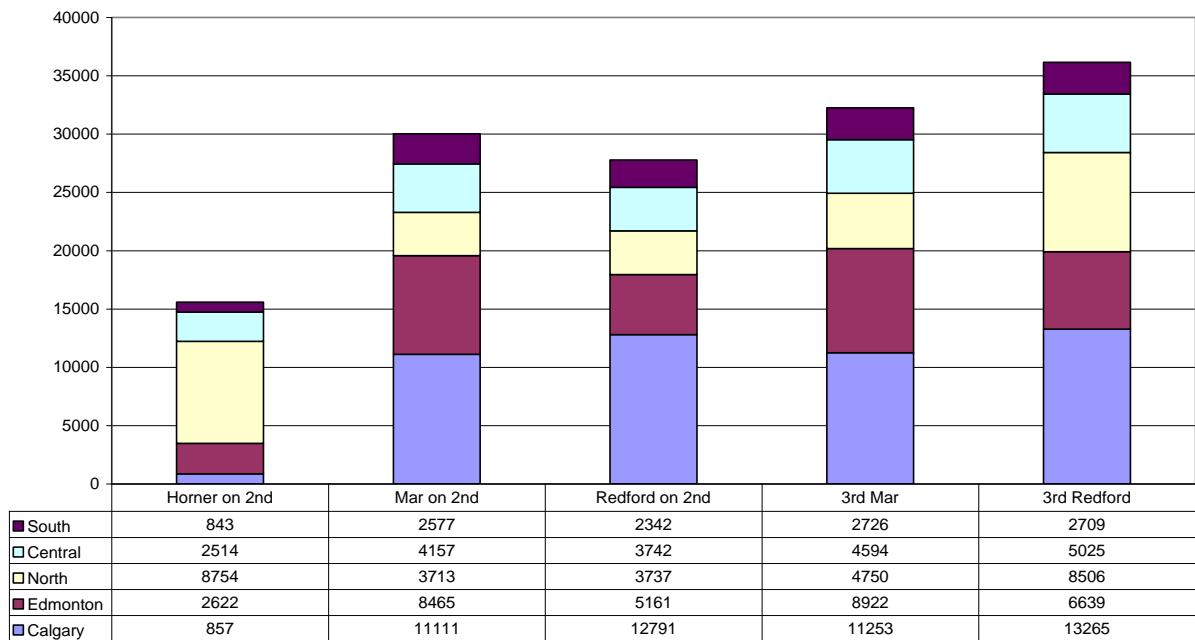


Not surprisingly, Calgary where four of the candidates lived was relatively divided with each of those candidates attracting over 10% of the vote. In contrast, support for the non-Calgary candidates Griffiths and Horner was negligible. Mar won an outright majority in Edmonton while Horner had an impressive 46% share of the vote in the north. Morton managed a second place finish in the southern ridings but in none of the other regions managed such a high showing. Mar's success in attracting votes throughout the province undoubtedly helped generate the impression that he was likely to win eventually.

The second and third ballots continued to demonstrate regional differences. Horner's hold on the north actually increased on the second ballot as he won 14 of the 17 ridings. Redford was able to break out of Calgary winning six ridings in Edmonton and eight in the central and southern regions. She was also able to reverse the Calgary results and won 13 ridings to only 10 for Mar. Mar remained competitive in all regions although the number of ridings he won declined from 52 to 39.

Figure 2

Vote by Region 2nd and 3rd Ballots



Looking specifically at the votes we see a majority of votes for Redford in Calgary, Mar in Edmonton and Horner in the north. Mar won pluralities in the central and south where the vote was much tighter. With the overwhelming majority of Horner's voters going to Redford, Mar won even fewer ridings on the third ballot and Redford won all of the ridings carried by Horner and four of the ridings in which Mar had enjoyed pluralities on the second. As in 1992 when Ralph Klein defeated Nancy Betkowski (see Stewart and Archer, 2000), Edmonton went heavily for the runner-up delivering almost 60% of the vote to Mar. He won a narrow majority of the southern vote while Redford carried the other three regions. Horner's support in Calgary was so small that the distribution of second preferences made little difference to the vote share in the province's largest city.

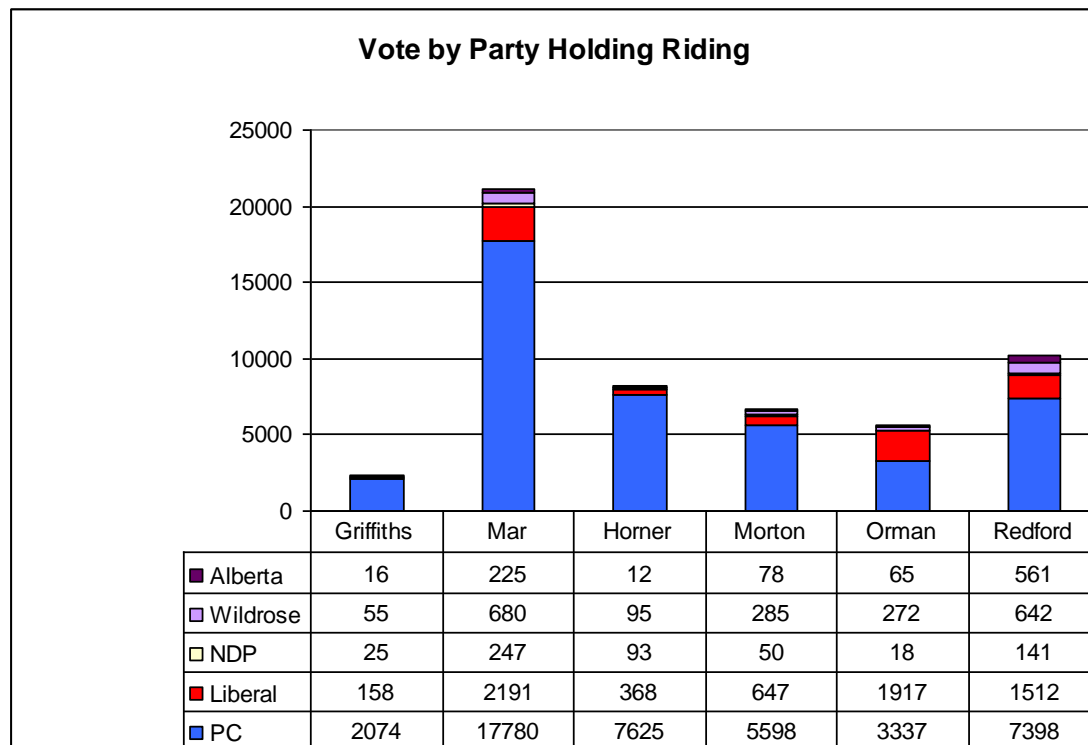
Partisan Dimensions

The open process utilized by the Alberta Conservatives allows voters who live in ridings controlled by the opposition parties to fully participate in the choice of leaders. We look at the success of the various candidates in carrying the ridings held by these parties and then discuss the votes each candidate received.

A look at the first ballot riding wins shows the difference in terms of support for Redford versus the other candidates. Five of the nine ridings won by Redford were controlled by opposition parties, but she won just four of the 67 PC held ridings. Morton's lack of continued appeal to Wildrose voters may also be inferred from his failure to win any of the four ridings the party held in the legislature and, unsurprisingly, he was not able to win any of the ridings held by the Liberals, New Democrats and Alberta parties. Once again we see the breadth of Mar's support as he won the vast majority of PC ridings and carried more than half of the opposition constituencies as well.

Figure 3 shows that Horner was the most dependent of the six candidates on PC ridings as more than 90% of his support came from such constituencies. The corresponding figures for Morton, Mar and Redford were 84%, 84% and 72%. Orman was the least dependent on Conservative ridings with 41% of his vote coming in opposition controlled areas.⁷

Figure 3



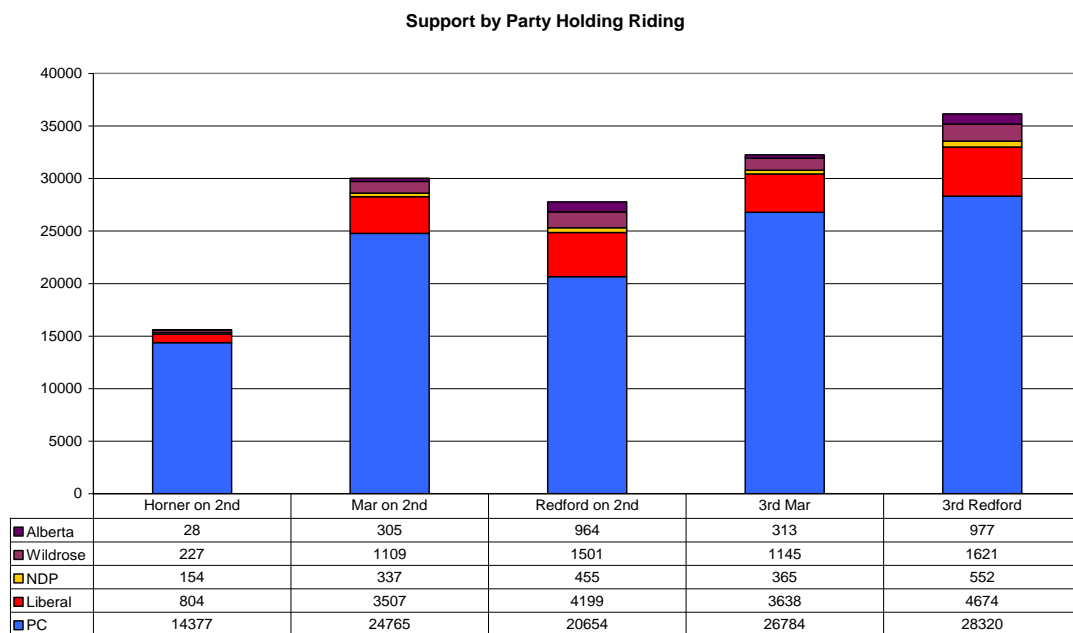
⁷ Much of this was in one riding Calgary McCall.

The second and third ballots saw a much more interesting division of support. On the second ballot, the Conservative held ridings were split with Mar carrying 34 while Horner won 17 and Redford 16. In the opposition controlled ridings Redford was much more successful carrying 11 to just 5 for Mar. The third ballot saw the Conservative ridings almost evenly split with 34 delivering majorities to Redford and 33 opting for Mar. Again, Redford proved much more successful in the opposition ridings winning 14 while Mar could carry just two.

Figure 4 shows the much greater higher levels of support enjoyed by Redford in the opposition areas on the two final ballots. Even on the second ballot Redford outpolled Mar in the ridings held by each of the opposition parties while losing the vote in Conservative held ridings by more than 4000 votes.

Horner was the most dependent on votes in Tory ridings with these areas accounting for 92% of his vote compared to 82% for Mar and 74% for Redford. Mar’s greater dependence on PC ridings continued on the final ballot as voters in those ridings provided 83% of his support and just 78% of Redford’s. Redford was nonetheless able to gain a majority of the vote in the Conservative ridings as well.

Figure 4



Endorsements:

The partisan differences in candidate support bring us to one of the more interesting elements of the 2011 primary, namely the role of candidate endorsements. In their analysis of party primaries in Anglo parliamentary systems, Cross and Blais note that “Even in parties using pure ‘one member one vote’ rules without any privileged role for the parliamentary party, candidates still find it advantageous to seek support in the party room” (2012, 137). In 2006 Stelmach was able to win despite receiving fewer MLA endorsements than Dinning (see Stewart and Sayers, 2009). Nonetheless, analysis of that primary suggests that the endorsements were at least somewhat

effective as they were associated with higher levels of support for Dinning. In 2011 Redford received virtually no first ballot support from her fellow MLAs. Indeed, if the Conservatives in Alberta used the same rules followed by their counterparts in the United Kingdom, Redford would not have even made it onto the ballot (see Heppell 2008 and 2010).⁸ Both Morton and Horner enjoyed wider support in the caucus than Redford and if the old method of caucus selection had been used she would not have emerged as party leader.

The desire of candidates to seek out MLA endorsements seems rational as it can provide them with a local organization in the ridings as well as an indication of strength that is likely to be noted by the media. To again cite Cross and Blais, endorsements are seen “as indicators of a candidate’s overall support level, the seriousness of their effort, and their chances of victory... The support of parliamentarians is also sought after in hopes that these individuals will use their local organizations to deliver blocks of voters from their constituencies” (2012, 137).

When we look at candidate success we see that the endorsements appear to deliver, at the very least they are associated with an increase in support. Mar’s mean first ballot support was 254, a figure inflated by the mean of 395 votes he received in ridings where the MLA had endorsed him. To look at it in another way he carried 24 of the 26 ridings where he was endorsed, but only 29 of the 57 ridings in which there was no endorsement.

The endorsements for Horner were also highly effective. In addition to his own riding he carried 9 of the ridings in which the MLA declared support for him and his mean vote in those riding was more than four times greater than his overall mean support of 60. Horner was well ahead of other candidates in support in those ridings. Morton was not as fortunate in his endorsements losing in 8 of the ridings in which he was endorsed and receiving a mean vote lower than that received by Mar.

To place the endorsements in a somewhat different context, 48% of Mar’s first ballot support came in the ridings in which he was endorsed as did 47% of Horner’s (Horner’s support increases to 53% when his own riding is included). The support for Morton looks quite different-- with only 21% of his support coming in ridings where he was backed by the local member and for Redford only a miniscule 1.6% came from that source.

The endorsement boost continued on the second ballot as well. Table 9 reveals the breakdown of support on the second and third ballots. Mar secures outright majorities in the ridings where he was endorsed on both ballots and Horner also gets more than half of the vote in those ridings. Both candidates win almost all of the ridings in which they are endorsed. With some MLAs moving to her after the first ballot Redford also sees a more significant endorsement effect. Her status and victory are however much more dependent on her support in the opposition held ridings as well as her own.

⁸ The UK Labour party requires candidates to be endorsed by at least 12.5% of elected members in order to contest the leadership while the Tories require a mover and a seconder from the parliamentary ranks.

On the final ballot Mar continued to win the vast majority of ridings in which he was endorsed and the implicit endorsement of Redford by Horner reaps huge dividends as she wins 13 of the 16 ridings in which Horner was the choice of the local member.

Table 9: Support by 2nd Ballot Endorsement Status

Endorsed	Horner on 2nd	Mar on 2nd	Redford on 2nd	3rd Mar	3rd Redford
Mar	4257	15033	9218	15775	11447
Redford	414	1723	1990	1793	2210
Horner	6961	3243	3286	4082	7012
Own	878	525	2013	607	2494
No one	1867	4241	4147	4527	5157
Opposition	1213	5258	7119	5461	7824

We look finally at the impact of the endorsement of Mar by the three eliminated candidates. We run a simple correlation between the vote gain by the two leading candidates on the second ballot and support for the eliminated candidate on the first. As Table 10 shows the relationship for Griffiths support is nonexistent. The Orman vote is highly and significantly correlated with the growth in support for Mar and there is a more modest association between the Morton vote and the gains in support for Mar. Interestingly, there is an even stronger association in growth for support for Redford and the Morton vote.⁹ On first analysis then, it appears that the endorsement by Orman was the only one that had much of an impact. Of course that does not include the third ballot where the transfer of votes from Horner supporters to Redford accounted for her victory.

Table 10:
Pearson Correlation between 2nd Ballot Vote Gain and Vote for Eliminated Candidates

	Mar Vote Gain	Redford Vote Gain
Morton vote	.272*	.444**
Orman vote	.743**	----
Griffiths vote	---	---
A single asterisk indicates significance levels of .05 and double asterisks indicate significance levels of .000		

While obviously the endorsement of the local member does not translate into victory, the benefits of such endorsements are obvious and they remain relatively effective, at least within the borders of the riding. Redford's victory demonstrates the support from MLAs is neither a necessary or sufficient condition for victory. Nonetheless, the

⁹ Earlier we cited a statement from Morton's campaign manager referring to Mar's support in a critical manner. Morton obviously could not convince even all of his key workers to join him in supporting Mar.

increased support levels found in ridings where endorsements had taken place suggest that candidates should continue to pursue such declarations of support.

Constituency Characteristics and Candidate Support:

The final part of our analysis probes for differences in candidate support. Moving beyond regional patterns, party dimensions and endorsements, we look for patterns relating to the socio-demographic characteristics of ridings and candidate support. No individual level data is available so this constituency level data provides the only opportunity to tentatively look for suggestive correlates in voting. We will examine support for each of the five major candidates in turn.

We begin by looking at support for Morton. As has been evident throughout the paper, an important part of the Conservative primary was the decline in support for Morton, a candidate that many saw as having the potential of minimizing the Wildrose challenge. By comparing the character of his support in 2011 and 2006, we are able to extend this analysis to consider possible explanations for this decline.

Table 11 presents simple bivariate correlations with support for Morton in both 2006 and 2011. In both elections his support was positively correlated with support for the Conservative and Alliance parties and negatively associated with NDP support and the size of the Catholic population. Not surprisingly there is also a positive correlation with support for him in 2006. There were, however, clear differences in the kinds of ridings in which Morton enjoyed higher levels of support in the more recent primary.

There was also a positive association between his 2011 vote and support for Jim Dinning in 2006 and Morton's support has more of an elite tint than it had in 2006 while also appearing less rural. Employment in agriculture had no significant relationship with support for Morton in 2011 while family income and university degrees were positively associated with Morton's support. In 2011 Morton did not enjoy markedly higher support related to the percentage of Albertan born residents in a riding and his support was actually negatively associated with larger numbers of Canadian born residents. Also notable is a reversal in direction of his support as it relates to the size of the immigrant population. Finally, in 2011 his support was not linked to the size of the population with no religious affiliation. In short Morton's support base was not only smaller than in 2006, but the characteristics of the ridings in which he did better also appear somewhat different.

Table 11 Correlates of Morton's Support 2006 and 2011¹⁰

	Morton 2006	Morton 2011
PCvote04 / 08	.49**	.25*
Libvote04 /08		.26*
NDPvote04/ 08	-.34**	-.24*
Alliance Vote 04/ 08	.34**	.29*
% Education		
% Agriculture	.45**	
Median Family Income		.35**
% University Degree		.40**
% over 65		
% Alberta born	.24*	
% Canadian outside Ab		-.23*
% Immigrant	-.28*	.23*
% Non-Christian	-.35**	
% Catholic	-.54**	-.23*
% with no rel- igious affiliation	-.29	
% Canadian Ethnicity		-.25*
Dinning 2006		.43**
Stelmach 2006		
Morton 2006		.56**

When we move on to look at the other candidates (Table 12) we see that Horner's support looks much like that received by Ed Stelmach in 2006 (see Stewart and Sayers, 2009). Indeed there is a strong correlation of .61 between support for Stelmach and support for Horner while there is a negative association with support for Dinning in 2006.

Like Stelmach, Horner was stronger in the rural areas of the province and did better in ridings where there was a larger agricultural workforce. Horner was stronger where the Catholic percentage was larger and his vote was higher when the percentage of Albertan or Canadian born increased. His support was negatively associated with the size of non-Christian and immigrant populations as well as among those who claimed no religious affiliation. Increases in the share of the university educated were also negatively related to Horner's support. There were few similarities between the correlates of support for Horner and support for the two leading candidates suggesting

¹⁰ It is important to keep in mind that the correlations are with constituency characteristics not individual voters.

that the decision of Redford to vocally commit to Horner was an important strategic move.

Table 12 Correlates of Major Candidate Support 2011

	Mar1 Mar2	Redford1 Redford2	Horner1 Horner2	Morton	Orman
PCvote08	.41** .33**	.29**	.32** .34**	.25*	
Libvote08	.45** .44**	.56** .64**		.26*	
NDPvote08				-.24*	
WildroseVote 08				.29*	
% Employed in Education		.24* .32**			
% Agriculture	-.25* -.32**	-.32** -.35**	.34** .37**		
Median Family Income	.46** .46**	.45** .52**		.35**	
% University Degree	.50** .46**	.71 .77**	-.22*	.40**	
% over 65	-.27*				
% Alberta born	-.24* -.34**	-.43** -.42**	.52** .57**		-.28*
% Canadian outside Ab	-.40** -.52**	-.25* -.29**	.40** .42**	-.23*	-.39**
% Immigrant	.41** .53**	.24* .27*	-.39** -.42**	.23*	.40**
% Non-Christian	.29** .47**		-.28* -.30**		.60**
% Catholic			.36** .36**	-.23*	
% with no religious affiliation		.22*	-.25** -.29**		
% Chinese Ethnicity	.54** .60**	.23* .26*	-.28** -.30**		
% Cdn Ethnicity	-.33** -.38**	-.27*		-.25*	
Dinning 2	.43** .53**	.72** .77**	-.25** -.30**	.43**	.44**
Stelmach2			.61** .62**		
Morton2				.56**	

As one might expect of the first serious leadership candidate from Alberta's Asian community, Mar's support was strongly and positively associated with the size of the non-Christian and immigrant population. Indeed the strongest associations seen for Mar were with the share of the population of Chinese origin.¹¹ Concomitantly, there were negative associations with the percentage of Albertan and Canadian born and those who described their ethnicity as Canadian. Mar's support was also stronger in ridings with a smaller proportion of retired people and where the proportion of university educated citizens was higher and where the population was more affluent.

Mar's support was positively associated with support for Dinning in 2006 as well as with PC and Liberal votes in 2008. We saw earlier the positive relationship between support for Orman and growth in Mar's vote between ballots. Not surprisingly there is much overlap in the characteristics of their stronger ridings. Like Mar, Orman did better when there were fewer residents born in Alberta or Canada and who described their ethnicity as Canadian. He did better where the size of the non-Christian and immigrant populations were higher.

We turn finally to the winner, Alison Redford and the first observation is that there are many similarities between her areas of support and those of Mar. In many ways they were competing for the same sorts of voters. Redford's support was higher in areas where the Liberal vote was higher in 2008 as well as, on the second ballot, with the areas where the Conservatives secured higher votes. Her vote was even more strongly correlated with Dinning's than was Mar's and she performed relatively worse in areas where employment in agriculture was higher and where more people claimed a Canadian ethnicity and were born in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada.

Redford's support was positively associated with the size of the immigrant population and in areas with higher median incomes. Her support was even more strongly associated with university education levels than was Mar's and she departs from Mar's pattern in enjoying higher levels of support as the percentage of those employed in education increased. The latter correlation is of some significance given some reports on the campaign which suggested that teacher's unions were highly supportive of Redford. Given the closeness of the final vote, reaching out to this group and securing the support of those who preferred Horner certainly contributed to her historic victory.

Redford's victory looks rather different from the Klein and Stelmach wins as this time the more elite and urban elements of the Conservative party emerged victorious. Ironically, this would have been the case even if Mar had won.

Conclusion

As is often the case in Canada, a governing party responded to an electoral threat by choosing a new leader. Most of the time such a change does not prevent electoral defeat (see Stewart and Carty, 1993), yet Alberta's Conservatives appear to have been able to demonstrate sufficient internal change to convince the electorate that they

¹¹ In twenty seven ridings the percentage of the population who claimed Chinese ethnicity was at least 5% and Mar won 82% of these ridings on the first ballot and 59% on the third. His vote share in those ridings was 46% and 65%. In the other ridings his vote share was 34% and 41%.

should be re-elected. The peculiarity of the Alberta situation may further contribute to this unusual effect. Forty years of Tory rule and long periods of strong economic growth have allowed the party to amass enormous resources to fight off challengers, while the small size and lack of governing experience of most opposition parties have been barriers to success.

Parties change leaders, at least in part, to win elections. By this measure the selection of Alison Redford was a huge success. The 2011 primary provides an opportunity to observe leadership choice in a dominant party when it is under challenge. This was also the case in 1992, but the process was so new it was difficult to place it in perspective. The comparisons with 2006 are difficult for the party, but it seems clear that turnout and participation are higher when the party's status is unchallenged. The participation levels are somewhat lower than in 1992 but this may be due to perceptions of non-competitiveness associated with Mar's huge lead, both in polls before the first ballot and on the actual first ballot. Certainly the first ballot results did not create the same excitement as the one vote difference in 1992.

The huge lead for Mar may also help explain why the party had a much lower turnout despite selling as many memberships as in 2006. It is quite possible that Mar's huge lead may have cost him the leadership. It is also possible that many took out their memberships after Redford's victory. It is interesting to note, for instance, that the number of voters participating in the Carston Taber Warner nomination in November was almost three times higher than on the second ballot of the leader primary (Markusoff, *Calgary Herald*, November 28, 2011).

Perceptions that Redford's victory was that of a relative outsider over the choice of the party establishment may have contributed to the party's ability to portray itself as 'changed'. In the subsequent 2012 general election Redford and the Conservatives capitalized on the notion of change and launched an ad campaign indicating that this was "Not Your Father's PC party." With Redford at the helm, there was some credence to this claim, particularly given the paucity of her support from the caucus.

Redford's relatively strong showing in Liberal held ridings in the leadership campaign may also have been significant as the Liberal vote declined significantly in the 2012 election and the Conservatives picked up a number of their seats. Indeed, even before the campaign began, one Liberal MLA crossed the floor to join the Conservatives. Redford's victory may well have made it easier for provincial Liberals to move their vote to the PC party in an effort to keep Wildrose from power. Even before the first ballot votes were counted *Globe and Mail* journalist Josh Wingrove indicated that Liberals were concerned about the impact of a Redford victory on their support "If she wins,' one top Alberta Liberal said, 'we might as well just fold up the tent and go home'" (September 15, 2011).

The Conservatives did not respond to the political challenge from the right by choosing a new leader from the party's right wing. As Pratt puts it "The reddest Tory on the list, Alison Redford, took the big prize, the right wing was repudiated with Ted Morton and Rick Orman going down to defeat on the first ballot and the old guard was rebuffed with Gary Mar's unexpected defeat" (Edmonton Journal, October 9, 2011). Although Flanagan indicated that in terms of game theory the Conservatives should move to the right to diminish the Wildrose challenge (2012, 20), work by

Stewart and Sayers (2010) on the 2008 election indicated that the views of Albertans were not that right wing, particularly with respect to social issues (see also Varcoe, *Calgary Herald*, November 6, 2011). Strategically it is quite possible that the Conservatives made an appropriate choice that maximized their chance of retaining power.

The openness of the Conservative's primary process places the leadership decision in the hand of ordinary voters, most of whom will not have a strong background of active party service (see Stewart and Archer, 2000). The decline in Morton's support suggests that the selectorate changed dramatically between 2006 and 2011 and lends credence to claims "that the 'conservative' flank of the party has deserted it" (Thomson, *Edmonton Journal* September 20, 2011). However, declining participation in the Conservative primary did not spill over into the general election as the party actually increased the number of votes it received. The relative weakness indicated by substantial participation declines in areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary, particularly in the southern and central regions where Morton's candidacy was strongest, proved somewhat prophetic as the Wildrose won most of the seats in the general election.

The open nature of the Conservative process carries with it heavy risks. If voters are uninterested, the turnout will be so low as to embarrass the party and provide a huge morale boost for the opposition. Although participation declined in ways that presaged Conservative challenges in the 2011 election, Albertans remained interested in the Conservative party and process with the number participating exceeding the total voting in all opposition leadership elections since 1992. Leadership elections in general and the Conservative open primary in particular provide important opportunities to both educate individuals about the party and allow for a redefinition of the party's voice. The decision as to who will lead the party rests in the hands of those who are willing to pay \$5 and attend a polling station. Redford's victory places the rules of the Conservative model front and centre. Virtually all leadership elections in Canada are won by the first ballot leader (see Stewart and Carty, 1993 and O'Neill and Stewart, 2009). Yet in Alberta with a new electorate enfranchised on the second ballot first ballot leads have proved irrelevant. Given the success of the Conservative party in subsequent elections and the huge influx of new voters it is interesting that no other Canadian party has been willing to risk a new second ballot electorate. The Conservative party's willingness to follow this path is a key part of their response to challenge and may well play a major role in the continuation of their dynasty. Conservative primaries provide a valuable window into Alberta politics and, as Stark notes in the British context, we "should welcome leadership contests without hesitation. They give us opportunities to learn about a party's policies and philosophy. They are a chance to observe the strengths and weaknesses of the men and women who would be prime minister. And they provide entertaining high drama" (1996, 166). Whether they are good for parliamentary democracy or governance are other matters!

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