

How Party Matters: A Comparative Assessment of the Openness of Left- and Right-  
Wing Governments to Women's Issues in Ontario and British Columbia 1980-2002

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## How Party Matters: A Comparative Assessment of the Openness of Left- and Right-Wing Governments to Women's Issues in Ontario and British Columbia 1980-2002<sup>1</sup>

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In November 1991, almost immediately after being elected to office, the left-wing BC NDP government of Michael Harcourt created the Ministry of Women's Equality (MWE). Even though BC already had a junior ministry to deal with women's issues, the MWE was the first and only full, free-standing ministry for women to be created in Canada with a mandate to advance women's equality (Erickson 1996; Teghtsoonian 2005). This was a significant achievement for women's groups and feminists within the BC NDP who had been trying to get the party to establish the ministry ever since it first formed a government between 1972 and 1975 (Erickson 1996). The MWE was a "central agency" within the BC government of the day. Its minister was given a seat on the two most important cabinet committees and the ministry as a whole was given a wide policy advisory role to "ensure that 'issues relating to women's equality [were] reflected in policy, legislation, services and programs throughout [the] government'" (quoted in Erickson 1996:199).

Ten years later, again almost immediately after being elected to office in 2001, the right-wing BC Liberals under Gordon Campbell eliminated the MWE, breaking a recently-made campaign promise to protect it. The Liberals replaced it with a junior Ministry of State for Women's Services, within the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (CAWS), which Katherine Teghtsoonian called a "sprawling entity...that incorporates a dizzying array of units and responsibilities transferred from seven different ministries" (2005:307). Not surprisingly, the goals of women's equality and gender-lens analysis that were central to the MWE were lost within the CAWS. According to the BC CEDAW Group submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, this decision, along with others made between 2001-2003 under the BC Liberals, meant that "British Columbia [was] moving backwards" in its commitment to protecting women's human rights (BC CEDAW Group 2003:2-3).

This example immediately raises questions as to the impact that different party governments can have on areas of particular interest to women and particularly whether one type of government (of the political left) is more open to women's issues than another (of the political right). A wide array of researchers has attempted to explain why governments in Western democracies made different public policy decisions in similar policy arenas. Many of these authors have argued that politics, and specifically the different ideological positions held by different party governments, matters.<sup>2</sup> This partisan theory literature largely measures partisan difference on a left-right continuum.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on empirical research and arguments made in my (2006) unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Governments and Women's Movements: Explaining Child Care and Anti-Violence Policy in Ontario and British Columbia, 1970-2000." I would like to thank my thesis supervision committee of Sylvia Bashevkin, David Rayside and Graham White for their helpful comments throughout the dissertation process, which have also influenced this paper.

<sup>2</sup>See for example see Castles 1982; Schmidt 1996. This position has also been supported by Canadian provincial public policy researchers (see McAllister 1989; Chandler 1982).

Downs (1957) suggested that left-right party differences were based on a party's willingness to intervene in the economy or not - those on the left were more open to state intervention whereas those on the right were less open to intervention. Those studying parties in Canada have also used this typology. According to Marsha Chandler, "the left favours a positive role for the state while the right leaves the economy to be shaped by market forces" (1982:715).

Yet even though many define the left/right axis as being linked to both economic conflict and, relatedly, social class, this has not remained static over time or across different cultures (Klingemann and Inglehart 1976). Even though links to social class and economic conflict have remained relevant to the left-right continuum in many cases, including in Canada, these have weakened slightly over time. Huber and Inglehart's study of the meaning of left and right in 42 countries argue that economic or class conflict relationships were the ones most cited in all but five of the cases. They further note two common alternative meanings - 1. authoritarianism versus democracy (13 countries) and 2. traditional versus new culture (also in 13 countries) (Huber and Inglehart 1995:83-84). They conclude by cautioning those using the scale to be clear on its meaning and to recognize that it often transcends the traditional economic definition commonly used. Indeed, Chandler in her study of state enterprise and partisanship in the Canadian provinces also identifies other elements of party difference including social values (1982:716). Social values on the right include small "c" conservative ideas of resistance to change, individualism and the maintenance of traditional family roles, while leftist social values are linked to small "l" liberal notions of equality, progressivism, and social democratic ideas of community (Schmidt 1996:168).

Although the use of left-right labels give use important information on how parties differ, it is not clear what these labels say about a party's willingness to be open to women's issues or not. A number of comparative women and politics studies point to the fact that left-wing parties are consistently more responsive to women movement claims than right-wing governments (Katzenstein and Mueller 1987, Randall 1988, Lovenduski and Norris 1993, Young 2000). Canadian research in this area also suggests that the left-of-centre New Democratic Party has been shown to be more open to the demands of women's movements than other parties in Canada (Collier 1995, 1997, 2001; Sigurdson 1996; Brock 1996).

Gibbins and Nevitte (1990) have suggested that the left's willingness to support welfare state expenditure increases has led it to be more open to women's issues than the right. However, economic or even class-based left-right differences alone do not explain instances when left-wing ideology clashes with feminist ideology (Swindells and Jardine 1990). Beckwith reminds us that feminist social movements' tensions between working with the state versus a desire to remain autonomous from patriarchal state actors has meant that their "relationship[s] with political parties, even leftwing parties, [are] not always amicable" (2000:441).

Comparative feminist studies have explored a further partisan difference to try to understand different parties' relationships with women's movements. Authors including Katzenstein and Mueller (1987), Brennan (1999) and Sapiro (1981) all suggest examining state and party orientations towards feminism to help determine how well women's movement demands will be received. Paxton and Kunovich refer to this as "gender ideology." Using answers to six gender-related questions posed as part of the 1990

World Values Survey, they establish positive versus negative gender attitudes in 46 countries (2003:96). A measurement of gender ideology or feminist consciousness can shed more light on partisan differences relevant to women's policy.

This paper asks whether left or right wing party governments have been more open to women's interests in Ontario and BC between 1980 and 2002. It will answer this by measuring partisan differences in the two ways suggested in the literature. It will then compare both of these partisan measures to actual policy responses to women's movements over time in two areas of women's policy - child care and violence against women - as a measurement of openness to women's issues. The paper argues that although left-wing parties are consistently more open to movement demands in both of these policy areas, it is essential to map feminist consciousness levels within both left and right-wing regimes to fully understand diversity in government responses to women's movements.

In order to illustrate these arguments the paper will first explain the comparative methodology used in this study and the choice of cases and variables. Then it will briefly set the context of left and right-wing government partisan differences in each of the two provinces, Ontario and BC, by highlighting important political culture and party system differences between each case. Then it chronicles shifting left/right and feminist consciousness differences within each party government from 1980 to 2002. Following this, the paper measures significant policy responses to movements in child care and anti-violence policy and concludes by comparing these to expectations raised based on the partisan empirical data.

### **Choice of Cases and Comparative Method**

Ontario and BC were chosen for this study because prior to 2000<sup>3</sup> they were both wealthy "have" provinces in the federation and fit the criteria for "most similar system" comparison, by far the most common among comparativists (Sartori 1991:250). Both provinces also have party systems with successful parties that are ideologically different and both have had left-wing parties form governments between 1980 and 2002 (see Tables 1 and 2 below). According to Sigurdson, partisan differences are more pronounced at the provincial level in comparison to the federal level where parties often stay closer to the centre of the political spectrum (1996; Clarke et. al 1996). Both provinces have jurisdictional responsibility over important policy areas of particular interest to women, including child care service delivery and services to deal with and help prevent violence against women.

In order to measure partisan differences, the paper briefly outlines the context of partisan activity in each province by highlighting important aspects of political culture and party system. Then it uses published statements and secondary research to establish the left-right orientation of each party using a combination of economic, class and social values as suggested above. At the same time it uses similar methods to establish the feminist consciousness levels of the party governments and how these have shifted over time. It also includes measurement of the number of women who held power within each government and in each cabinet over time. A measurement of numeric representation of women has often been linked to substantive representation or policy results in the literature and therefore it has the potential to speak to levels of feminist consciousness

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<sup>3</sup> In 2000, BC became a have-not province for the first time since federal equalization payments began.

within the parties as well.<sup>4</sup> All of these variables are considered together to predict times when feminist, pro-movement policy responses were more likely and conversely, when they were less likely.

The dependent variable for the study is policy results in the areas of child care and violence against women. Although these are not the only two policy areas of importance to women, they both represent key, visible demands of the second and third waves of feminist activism in Canada. Calls for improvements in child care delivery have been made since World War II and formed one of the four key recommendations of the federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970. Although violence against women was not addressed in the RCSW Report, it became an important focus during the second wave of the women's movement. By measuring government responses to both of these different feminist policy concerns, the paper speaks to the larger question of women's movement effectiveness in Ontario and BC. Significant changes in child care and anti-violence policy as identified by activists were measured as being pro- or anti-feminist or somewhere in between using a +, -, +/- scale.<sup>5</sup>

The paper concludes by comparing the independent and dependent variables to determine which type of government on both a left/right and feminist consciousness scale was more open to women's issues and which was less open. It will then argue for the inclusion of feminist consciousness measurements in future women and politics comparative studies.

## **Party Governments in Ontario 1980-2002**

### *Red Tory Political Culture and Three-Party System*

Ontario is a large and influential province. This size, level of economic prosperity and leadership within Canada help us understand the predominant values and attitudes that are held by many living in the province. According to MacDermid and Albo, these values are essentially "synonymous with political conservatism and economic stability" (2001:163). As well, research by John Wilson discovered that many in the province embraced more progressive values such as reform, community and innovation, and expected governments to balance a variety of interests within the polity (1980:223). Wilson goes on to argue that "Ontario was best described as a 'red tory' province, quite different from any other part of Canada," because it was both progressive and conservative in nature (1997:58). Parties that wanted to form governments would have to balance a progressive willingness "to seek changes which initially may have limited support" with a more conservative "contentment with the status quo and a tendency to resist change"(MacDonald 1994:297).

General openness to feminist ideas, in Ontario as well as across the country, has changed over time as awareness of feminist issues has grown. In the absence of specific studies on openness to feminist ideas in the provinces,<sup>6</sup> it is still possible to draw some basic general conclusions on attitudes toward women's issues. In the early 1970s when

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Arscott and Trimble (2003), Tremblay and Trimble (2003).

<sup>5</sup> For the interests of time and space, these policies are not examined in any detail as part of this analysis.

<sup>6</sup> Simeon and Elkins (1980:99) measured regional policy preferences on questions related to women's rights but found few differences among the provinces.

the women's movement was new and feminist ideas were just being introduced into the political mainstream, understanding of and openness to feminism was generally low. This is different in the later 1980s when the Canadian political elite began recognizing feminist ideas to the extent that there was a national debate on women's issues during the 1984 federal election. In the later 1990s, feminist ideas were not as prominent in public discourse, yet were still more legitimate and widely held than in earlier years.

Ontario was the only province in Canada during 1980-2002 with a strong three party system.<sup>7</sup> Until the mid-1980s, the three main parties were seen to converge to a certain extent during electoral contests because the winning recipe for electoral success was a centre-right strategy that only shifted slightly on the conservative/progressive scale (Williams 1996:505). During this period, the Liberals and Conservatives consistently sat on the centre-right of the political spectrum, with both jumping to the left and right of each other depending on the predispositions of their leaders and the weight of left and right factions within each party's membership. The CCF/NDP consistently sat to the left of the other two parties, although the extent of the left's influence on the party was tempered by the predispositions of the leader and the weight of left and right factions within the membership. In 1985, rapid changes occurred in party fortunes, with all three parties gaining office in 1985, 1990 and 1995 respectively. The centre grew weaker after 1985 and heightened party divergence continued with the first election of a left-of-centre NDP government in 1990 and the 1995 election of the right-wing Harris Conservatives.

**Table 1 - Ontario Governments**

Year	Party	Leader	Popular Vote (%)	Seats
1977	Progressive Conservative	Bill Davis	40	58/125
1981	Progressive Conservative	Bill Davis	44	70/125
1985	Progressive Conservative	Frank Miller	37	44/125
1985	Liberal/NDP Accord	David Peterson	38	48/125
1987	Liberal	David Peterson	47	95/130
1990	NDP	Bob Rae	38	74/130
1995	Progressive Conservative	Mike Harris	45	82/130
1999	Progressive Conservative	Mike Harris	45	59/103
2002	Progressive Conservative	Ernie Eves	45	59/103

Source: Dyck 1996, Dunn 1996, Drummond and MacDermid 1997, [www.electionsontario.on.ca/results](http://www.electionsontario.on.ca/results), [www.canoe.ca/CNEWSOntarioElection/home](http://www.canoe.ca/CNEWSOntarioElection/home).

### *Ontario's Political Parties*

Table 1 presents the parties that have formed governments in Ontario between 1977 and 2002. What it does not show is the dominance of the Progressive Conservative Party for 43 years between 1942 and 1985 until the Liberals and NDP took turns governing. Yet all three parties varied over time. In order to uncover these important differences between and within the parties, the paper more closely examines each of the three parties below, when they held office. It pays particular attention to shifting attitudes and values among party leaders and cabinet ministers (especially those

<sup>7</sup> A three-party system is characterized by "the presence of three enduring and competitive parties and the periodic experience of minority government" (Carty and Stewart 1996:81-82).

responsible for women's policy) with regard to left/right values and levels of feminist consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Progressive Conservative Party*

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party (or the Conservative Party as it was first known) can trace its roots back to pre-Confederation times. During the early years, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party were essentially part of a two-party system. The Liberals were more successful during these years, but the Conservatives remained competitive and held office from the early to the mid-1900s. In 1943, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (later NDP) came on the provincial scene and a sustained three-party system was born. This same year also marked the beginning of the famed Tory dynasty, with a Conservative win under leader George Drew. Drew changed the name of the party to the Progressive Conservatives, following the lead of the federal party, and announced a "somewhat radical 22-point program" described by Dyck as more left-wing and "progressive" than would normally be expected of the self-declared right-wing conservative Drew (1996:338).

At the same time, this red-Tory stream in the party reflected one element in a range of values that were present in the larger political culture. Peter Woolstencroft argues that the PC party had three separate factions, each representing approximately one third of the membership (1997:43). The first was decidedly progressive and favoured state intervention to help the needy. The second was right-wing liberal and resisted state involvement in private or family matters. The third mediated compromise between the other two, and was centrist. The existence of these three factions left the party open to ideological swings over time, and helps to explain differences in Tory governments overall as well as differences in their approaches to women's policy over the years. Bill Davis' was Ontario Premier for 14 years at the end of the 43-year Tory dynasty (1971-1985) reflecting his ability to be pragmatic, as he balanced both progressive and conservative approaches and kept the party firmly on the centre-right (Hoy 1985).

Davis' willingness to "govern by polls" (Hoy 1985:221) helps explain his attitude towards feminist issues and women's groups. The second-wave women's movement worked hard to put women's issues on the public agenda during the Davis years, and its early, albeit limited, success in the 1970s shaped the premier's responses. In the mid-1980s, when the women's movement was beginning to make important inroads provincially and nationally, Davis seemed to warm more to feminist concerns. Before his retirement, he promised the Tories would "not take a back seat to any other [government] on women's issues" (Hoy 1985:244). Davis did not stay around long enough to make this promise a reality.

**Table 2—Women as Percentage of Ontario Party Caucuses 1977-2002<sup>9</sup>**

Election Year	Progressive Conservatives	NDP/CCF	Liberals
1977	* 5	6	3

<sup>8</sup> Research by Bashevkin (1996) and Sigurdson (1996) strongly suggests that leadership effects are important to consider when measuring differences in party government.

<sup>9</sup> Note that Table 2 does not include the results of by-elections held post-2000, as they did not drastically alter the percentages.

1981	* 6	5	3
1985	6	12	* 6
1987	6	16	* 17
1990	15	* 26	13
1995	* 13	24	13
1999	* 15	44	20

Note - \* indicates governing party. Sources – Collier (1995) and Elections Ontario (1999)

**Table 3 – Women Cabinet Ministers in Ontario 1978-2002**

Year	Party Government	Number	Percentage (%)
1978*	PC	3/26	11.5
1981	PC	2/26	8
1985	PC	2/28	7
1985	Liberal	2/23	9
1987	Liberal	4/26	15
1990	NDP	11/25	44
1995	PC	4/20	20
1999	PC	5/25	20
2002	PC	6/25	24

Note years marked with asterisk \* when 100% of women elected to the governing party were promoted to cabinet.

Sources – Canadian News Facts 1985-1999; Kome (1985), Campbell (1993), UDI/Ontario Press Release 2002.

Table 2 shows that women never made up more than 6% of the governing caucus during the Davis years and Table 3 shows that women only made up slightly more than 10% of cabinet ministers. The party also did not have a women’s organization in place to promote feminist issues within the party or legislature, which contrasted with the situation in the Ontario NDP.<sup>10</sup>

Davis’ successor, Frank Miller, was initially less open to women’s issues than his predecessor. Miller’s philosophy on women’s issues mirrored his right-wing reputation as a “free-enterpriser,” who wanted to provide women with “fair opportunities” and not much else (Speirs 1986:102). This approach led many to view Miller as being “out of touch with the needs of women” (Speirs 1986:97). However, even though Miller was right-wing and initially not open to women’s concerns, he was persuaded to respond to the popularity of women’s issues during the 1985 election (Speirs 1986:101).

Mike Harris, a virtual unknown on the provincial political scene, stepped in and won the 1990 leadership campaign and would be the next to lead the PCs back to power after Miller lost it in 1985. Like Miller, Harris was decidedly more right-wing than Davis. According to Thomas Walkom, Harris’ “small-c conservat[ism]” was “instinctive;” he was “convinced of government’s inherent inefficiency, unhappy with taxes, suspicious of so-called disadvantaged groups (such as women, the poor, Indians) that the liberal welfare state of the 1970s and 1980s had busily promoted,” including under his own party’s watch (1997:410).

Harris’ neo-liberal attitudes coloured his view of women’s groups and women’s issues. He consistently referred to women as “special interests” that clearly had “no

<sup>10</sup> The extra-parliamentary Conservative women’s association had been active since 1972, but not to promote feminist issues or to press the parliamentary party to enact feminist policy (OPC, Momentum, 1972).

priority” in his government (Ibbitson 1997:112). A large number of program cuts that Harris pursued after being elected also were aimed directly at women (Lightman and Baines 1996:146). Harris also put considerable distance between himself and the provincial women’s movement by routinely refusing to meet with activists. Another part of this agenda of ‘freezing out’ members of the women’s movement included eliminating the Ontario Advisory Council on Women’s Issues (OACWI) in the spring of 1996. The OACWI was originally created in 1983 by Bill Davis, to advise a very different Progressive Conservative government on women’s policy issues, consult with women’s groups, and evaluate existing government policy. The government of Mike Harris decided that the OACWI was redundant and expendable.

Many in the Conservative Party shared Harris’ anti-feminist stance. Even though the right wing policy platform the PCs ran on in 1995 and that served as a blueprint for policy during their first term in office known as the *Common Sense Revolution (CSR)* was created by Harris and his close advisers, it “reflected very deeply both the spirit and content” of party policy discussions held in annual policy conferences throughout the 1990s (Woolstencroft 1997:380). Women made up 13 and 15% of the government caucus in 1995 and 1999, respectively, and 20% of cabinet ministers during these years (the highest percentages in Conservative history), however, Table 3 shows that these numbers represented a significant drop from the NDP level of more than 40% in 1990.

Harris won consecutive majorities for the Conservatives, but his popularity began to drop during his second mandate after earlier cuts to government services came back to haunt him. In 2002, former Harris Finance Minister Ernie Eves came out of retirement to take over the leadership and job of Premier with Tory popularity at a new low (Eastendbooks 2003). Even though Eves was the architect behind many of the cuts to program spending that occurred during the Harris years, he was viewed by many as one who balanced his fiscal conservatism with a “nagging social conscience.” He called himself a “Red Tory” much in the same mould as Bill Davis and much more so than his immediate predecessor (Ibid 2003:1). Eves was not in power very long to have much impact on this study, but he did manage to increase the number of women in his cabinet, raising the percentage to a Conservative high of 24.

### *The Liberal Party*

Like the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberals enjoyed a long history in Ontario dating back to pre-Confederation times. The party won office in the early years, but was in opposition once the Conservative dynasty took hold in 1943. While the Tories ruled the province, the Liberals shared opposition space with the CCF/NDP, and swapped official opposition status periodically with that party. The Liberals carved out a space to the right of the Conservatives during the dynasty years.

After the Conservative dynasty finally crumbled in 1985, the NDP under Bob Rae struck a post-election agreement with the minority Liberals under David Peterson to defeat the Tories in the legislature and put the Liberals into power. Previously, Peterson’s Liberals had promoted a political agenda that was more right-wing than that of the Davis Tories, but they moved into the unoccupied centre when the Tories vacated that space. The 1985 Liberal election platform was more similar to the NDP’s electoral position than the Tories’, with some accusing the Liberals of stealing several policies from the NDP (Dyck 1991:328). The adoption of the Liberal-NDP Accord after the

election saw the Liberals cement its position further to the left. Again, the presence of both left and right-wing factions within the Liberal party left it open to shifts over time.

David Peterson was a pragmatic Liberal, unafraid to adopt a more progressive stance when necessary (Gagnon and Rath 1991). Peterson's business background made it easy for him to adopt a right-wing position when he first became Liberal leader (Speirs 1986: 64). At the same time, Peterson was comfortable addressing environmental issues, pension reform and issues of particular concern to women such as equal pay and universal day care, and called himself a "reform Liberal" (Ibid). This willingness to support both progressive and conservative values put Peterson in a good position to move the party toward the centre-left in order to boost his popularity. Party strategists suggested he "grab the social-conscience role from the NDP, and appeal to the people Miller was turning off - urbanites, women, youth and ethnic origins" (Speirs 1986: 77-78). These moves paved the way to the Accord with the NDP in 1985. However, the numbers of women legislators and female cabinet ministers in Ontario remained virtually unchanged from the later years of the Tory dynasty, even though the Liberal government appeared to be more open to feminist influences.

Buoyed by the popularity of the Accord agenda, Peterson went on to win a majority government in 1987. The Liberals at first appeared to begin the period between 1987 and 1990 as a left-of-centre progressive government, even though they were no longer formally associated with the NDP. Not long into their majority mandate, however, the Liberals seemed to shift toward the centre in response to an economic downturn, preferring the maintenance of the status quo instead of active social renewal (R. White 1985:185). The Liberals were not as successful as the Tories had been during the dynasty years; they fumbled their strong public support during the 1990 election campaign and lost to the NDP.

Tables 2 and 3 show that the numbers of women in caucus and cabinet rose substantially following the 1987 election. Liberal women made up 17% of the caucus and 15% of cabinet ministers – records at the time in Ontario. Yet, despite the fact that more women were elected and promoted to cabinet after 1987, women's issues did not command the same attention as they had between 1985 and 1987.

### *The New Democratic Party*

The New Democratic Party has a shorter history in Ontario than the Liberals and Conservatives. The party grew out of the 1930s Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, whose Regina Manifesto of 1933 stressed the values of "public ownership of vital industries, peaceful parliamentary democracy and planning" to help "farmers, who wanted better prices; working people, who wanted jobs; and ... 'all who believe that the time has come for a far-reaching reconstruction of our economic and political institutions'" (quoted in Walkom 1994: 35). The party's first Ontario breakthrough came in 1943, with election to official opposition status.

As the New Democratic Party in 1961, the democratic left of the CCF and trade union movement set out to gain the votes of unionized workers and the working class. During the early 1970s, the NDP's left-wing Waffle faction (formed in 1969) forced a debate over future directions. The overall debate split the NDP "along its traditional fault lines" (Walkom 1994:37). The Waffle was expelled from the party and the NDP became more centre-left in orientation.

Bob Rae led the NDP to its first majority government in 1990. He was coaxed into the job of provincial NDP leader as a popular federal MP, a moderate who the party leadership hoped could better appeal to the electorate. Rae represented the more small 'c' conservative left within the NDP, yet referred to himself as a “democratic socialist” who embraced the values of “equality and solidarity” (Rae 1989). The NDP under Rae surprisingly won a majority of seats with only 38 per cent of the popular vote in 1990, shocking everyone including Rae himself (Rae 1996).

Overall, Bob Rae’s personal attitude toward women’s groups and feminist policy appeared fairly favourable during his tenure in office. Michele Landsberg, a feminist columnist with the *Toronto Star* and wife of former NDP leader Stephen Lewis, once noted that Rae seemed “sincerely interested in the kinds of women’s issues that moved me” (quoted in Walkom 1994: 33). While in opposition, Rae repeatedly criticized the government for its lack of attention to women’s issues. As well, in the lead-up to the 1990 election, he made numerous references to the importance of feminist analysis to the party, and cited the women’s movement as a key NDP constituency (Rae 1989).

As premier, Rae continued to assure the women’s movement that women’s issues were a top priority.<sup>11</sup> This had much to do with the high levels of feminist consciousness within the NDP government elite. As shown in Table 2, Rae appointed eleven women to his 25-member cabinet including high-profile feminists such as Marion Boyd, Frances Lankin and Evelyn Gigantes in key positions.<sup>12</sup> These 11 women constituted 44% of the cabinet, the highest percentage in Canadian history. Women made up 26% of the government caucus, also a record high.

In the end, Bob Rae’s NDP lost power, largely due to its perceived inability to manage during a deep recession. Although the NDP tried to address the failing economy during its final years in power, these efforts came up short in the minds of the electorate, which sent the party into opposition in 1995.

### **Ontario Partisan Openness to Women's Issues 1980-2002**

From the evidence above it is possible to draw up a set of hypotheses as to when women's policy gains would be more or less likely based on party attitudes, particularly focussing on levels of feminist consciousness. For the Progressive Conservatives, it is clear that the Davis years 1980-1985 would be more likely to see progress in women's policy than during the Common Sense Revolution under Mike Harris from 1995 to 2002. While it would be hard to typify Davis as "pro-feminist" his centre-right pragmatism made him amenable to women's movements, particularly as women's issues were prominent during the mid-1980s. By contrast, Harris appeared to be "anti-feminist" in that he often targeted women's services, viewed women as "special interests," and refused to consult with women's groups throughout his tenure. The situation for women likely would have improved somewhat under the more moderate leadership of Ernie Eves. However, Eves was unable to regain the trust of the electorate and lost the subsequent election in 2003.

The Liberals and NDP both seemed to hold higher levels of feminist consciousness than under any Progressive Conservative regimes throughout these years.

<sup>11</sup> Confidential activist interview, December 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Burt and Lorenzin’s survey of NDP women caucus members found that more than 70% (10/14) reported membership in a second-wave women’s group (1997:222-223).

The Liberals were particularly open to women's issues during the Accord years with the NDP. This openness was challenged after the Liberals won a majority government in 1987 and was no longer forced to be as progressive as it had in the past. The NDP happily filled this more progressive role and captured office in 1990. High levels of feminist consciousness along with a high number of feminist cabinet ministers in positions of power suggests that the years 1990-1995 would perhaps be the most productive for women's movements than any other time over the entire study period.

## Party Governments in BC 1980-2002

### *Polarized Political Culture and Two Party System*

Nelson Wiseman likens BC's political culture to that of Australia. Both rely on resources from their hinterlands, are largely urban in nature, are "radical offshoots of Europe" and have developed "left-right, urban-rural and class-driven political cleavages" (1996:55-56). An historic division emerged between workers and management, which led to relatively strong class-consciousness. The existence of strong class cleavages in BC's political culture has also contributed to an enduring ideological polarization and a "prolonged ideological conflict between the forces of acquisitiveness and individualism on the one hand and equality and collectivism on the other" (Dyck 1991:555).

While these cleavages crosscut left-wing and right-wing divisions to a certain extent, their strong presence in BC has helped foster a more polarized political culture and party system than in Ontario. According to Blake, Carty and Erickson, BC has a "sharper left-right focus than any other part of English-speaking North America" (1991:124). Since 1952, only two parties have garnered a stable percentage of the popular vote at any one point in time and could be considered to be competitive - one party sat on the right of the political spectrum, and the other party on the left.

According to Blake, Carty and Erickson, "[i]n polarized politics there is no centre, or at least the centre is very weak" and those who fight for control of government are backed by supporters who occupy positions close to the extremes of the left-right political spectrum (Blake, Carty and Erickson 1991:3). The CCF/NDP was the sole party on the left in British Columbia between 1980 and 2002. Parties on the right during this period included the Social Credit Party until the early 1990s, and the Liberals from the late 1990s through 2000.

**Table 4 - British Columbia Governments**

Year	Party	Leader	Popular Vote (%)	Seats
1979	Social Credit	Bill Bennett	48	31/55
1983	Social Credit	Bill Bennett	50	35/55
1986	Social Credit	Bill Vander Zalm	49	47/55
1991	Social Credit	Rita Johnston	49	47/55
1991	NDP	Mike Harcourt	40	51/75
1996	NDP	Glen Clark	39	39/75
2000	NDP	Ujjal Dosanjh	39	39/75
2001	Liberals	Gordon Campbell	57	77/79

Source: Dyck 1996, Dunn 1996, Blake 1996, [www.elections.bc.ca/elections](http://www.elections.bc.ca/elections).

### *BC's Political Parties*

Table 4 shows three parties held office between 1980 and 2002. In comparison to Ontario, BC's polarized two-party system saw only left- and right-wing parties form governments and this also led to greater NDP success in BC than in Ontario.

### *The Social Credit Party*

Social Credit ideas were developed first in Alberta, where William "Bible Bill" Aberhart, a radio evangelist, introduced them during the Depression. With financial backing from the Alberta party, BC Social Credit was established in 1951 (Twigg 1986:203). Wiseman argues that the BC Social Credit party had little in common with its Alberta neighbour, serving instead as "the new anti-socialist, coalitionist, standard-bearer" under a label that was "convenient rather than principled" (1996:57). He notes that from the beginning, the Social Credit party was a coalition of federal Liberal and Conservative supporters, as well as "bona-fide Socreds" who appealed to "ex-Albertans, religious fundamentalists, small businesspeople, and other conservatives" (1996:606).

In 1975, Bill Bennett regained office for the Socreds after three years in opposition to the NDP. The Socreds had just finished a lengthy tenure in office between 1952 and 1972 under Bill Bennett's father W.A.C. Bennett, who was a pragmatic right-wing leader. The Socreds shifted more toward the right under the younger Bennett, likely in response to 3 years of NDP rule (Blake 1996:74). Bill Bennett's neo-conservatism saw the right-wing core of the party gain control over the policy agenda during his years as leader (Harper 1986). This harder right-wing focus did not spell good news for the provincial women's movement. For example, after International Women's Year in 1975, Bill Bennett cut the women's program budget and eliminated the position of Provincial Coordinator of the Status of Women unit, claiming that it had only been put in place for International Women's Year, was an NDP commitment, and was largely ineffective (Women Rally for Action file 1976, Women's Movement Archives).

These views were widely held by other members of the parliamentary party. Bill Vander Zalm, Bill Bennett's Minister of Human Resources and later BC Premier, called people on social benefits "welfare bums" who were intentionally avoiding work (Women Rally for Action file 1976, Women's Movement Archives). He also stated that "special funds for women is against the equality of women" (Ibid).

**Table 5 – Women as Percentage of BC Party Caucuses 1979-2002**

Election Year	Social Credit	NDP/CCF	Liberals	Liberal/Conservative Coalition
1979	*6	15	0	---
1983	*6	18	0	---
1986	*8	23	0	---
1991	0	*31	18	---
1996	---	*31	24	---
2001	---	100	*22	---

Note - \* indicates governing party. Sources – Elections BC (1991), (1996), (2000), (2001).

**Table 6 – Women Cabinet Ministers in British Columbia 1979-2002<sup>13</sup>**

Year	Party Government	Number	Percentage (%)
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<sup>13</sup> Table 6 does not include every cabinet shuffle between 1970 and 2000, but does include shuffles in which the numbers or percentages of women changed, and shuffles that resulted from changes in government.

1979	Social Credit	1/19	5
1983	Social Credit	1/19	5
1986	Social Credit	2/19	10.5
1989	Social Credit	2/23	9
1991	Social Credit	2/20	10
1991	NDP	7/19	37
1996	NDP	5/15	33
1997	NDP	6/16	37
1999	NDP	7/21	33
2000	NDP	8/21	38
2001	Liberal	8/28	28.5

Sources – Canadian News Facts 1985-1999; Kome (1985), Campbell (1993), Elections BC (2001).

Although Bennett's approach to women did not soften much during his initial terms in office, his third term beginning in 1983 went "far beyond what had been promised in the campaign and [was] generally more extreme than... Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher" (Dyck 1991: 585). Although he promised to get the province's finances under control, the barrage of cuts that followed was surprising, including to women's movement activists. Alan Garr argues that Bill Bennett had a deep loathing for the welfare state, believing that it "weakens individual initiative and dampens the entrepreneurial spirit" (1985:51).

Bill Bennett's last term in office is best described as anti-feminist. According to Garr, women's groups were "long-time Sacred enemies" and Bennett embraced this philosophy (1985:102). He was on record as one of the few premiers willing to drop equality rights from the Charter (Persky 1983). His restraint agenda was particularly harmful to women (Garr 1985:116).

Feminist consciousness levels within the party remained extremely low during the Bennett years. The only woman to hold a cabinet position was Grace McCarthy, who served from 1975 to 1986. As Table 4 shows, Bennett finally doubled the number of women in cabinet in 1986 by adding Rita Johnson to the Municipal Affairs portfolio. However, Johnson was, like McCarthy, not an ally of extraparliamentary women's organizations.

In mid-1986, Bennett announced his resignation. During the summer leadership convention, the party chose controversial former cabinet minister Bill Vander Zalm to replace Bennett. Vander Zalm's charisma and ability to charm the media helped the Socreds revive a tired image and win the 1986 election, despite having been behind the NDP in earlier polls. An immigrant from Holland who had survived horrible conditions during the Second World War, Vander Zalm believed people were rewarded for hard work and tenacity and for refusing handouts like welfare (Twigg 1986:57). Yet the premier was willing to moderate his right-wing tendencies during the end of his term, when he increased social spending in an effort to stay in office. He also became more publicly committed to fundamentalist religious views, and voiced a firm anti-choice stance on abortion, for example.

Vander Zalm's religious beliefs and right-wing convictions help explain his patriarchal attitude towards women's issues. Opposition to abortion was a key plank in the Sacred platform during his years as leader, and was hugely unpopular with women's

groups.<sup>14</sup> His government challenged the 1988 Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Morgentaler case, which directed governments to make abortion services available to women (Persky 1989:159).

The party did not have a women's rights policy nor did it have a women's committee. Although the extra-parliamentary party was divided on issues of government restraint and deregulation, it was more homogeneous on women's issues. In a 1986-87 survey of party delegates, Blake et al. found that only 13.8% agreed with the notion that government should support women. On the issue of government spending on day care, 46.1% said that spending should *not* increase, while 36.3% suggested spending be reduced (Blake et al. 1991:62&76).

Despite their traditional views, the Vander Zalm Socreds were later convinced by their low showing in the polls to try to "woo women's votes" (Erickson 1996:117). The 1989 Throne speech thus included promises on the environment, women, aboriginals and post-secondary education. Even though Vander Zalm never appointed more than two women to cabinet, he did try to appeal to disaffected women voters by appointing Carol Gran, an MLA with a sympathetic view of the women's movement, to the position of Minister of Government Management Services and Minister Responsible for Women's Programs. BC thus became the last province in Canada to establish an "advocacy role within the government for women" (Stainsby 1989).

Vander Zalm was forced to resign in 1991, accused of violating government conflict of interest guidelines over the ownership and sale of his Fantasy Gardens theme park. Rita Johnson won the subsequent leadership convention and immediately called an election, despite the Socreds' low standing in the polls (Gawthrop 1996:20). That election saw the Socreds, led by the first woman premier in Canada (albeit one with a low level of feminist consciousness), finish last behind the NDP and the resurrected Liberals (Gawthrop 1996:48). Shortly thereafter, four of the seven Socred members joined smaller right-wing parties, while the others aligned themselves with the opposition Liberals (Blake 1996:78). It was not long before the Social Credit party disappeared from BC politics altogether.<sup>15</sup>

### *The New Democratic Party*

Like its counterpart in Ontario, the BC New Democratic Party began as the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. During its first campaign in 1933, the BC CCF ran under a platform promising "a radical transformation of society including the socialization of the financial machinery of the country...the socialization of the basic resource industries, the socialization of health services, free education from public school through university, the rapid expansion of social services," and "reallocation of the tax burden" (quoted in Blake 1996:70). The party managed a strong showing in 1933 and formed the official opposition (Blake 1996:70).

The more radical labour and socialist movements that helped form the BC CCF, meant that the entire organization was more radical in BC than in other provinces. Over time, however, the changing nature of the internal membership moderated the party to a

<sup>14</sup> Polls showed that 2 out of 3 BC residents opposed the abortion policy, while 80% saw it as the wrong mix of religion and politics (Persky 1989:168).

<sup>15</sup> The party still ran candidates in the 2001 provincial election but only won 0.1% of the popular vote (Globe and Mail 2001).

certain extent (Dyck 1996). In 1961, as the BC CCF became the New Democratic Party, it adopted close institutional ties to the labour movement and became “less overtly socialist, and certainly less enamoured of public ownership, than was the CCF” (Sigurdson 1996:315).

The NDP first gained office in 1972 under Dave Barrett. This incarnation of the party was more focused on labour and class issues instead of feminist ones, despite the presence of strong women within the party caucus (Brown 1989). It lost power in 1975 and formed the official opposition to the Socreds until 1991. Former Vancouver Mayor Mike Harcourt was acclaimed NDP leader at the 1987 party convention. Harcourt saw himself as a moderate who could “appeal to the masses” including “ordinary people,” by paying attention to budgets and deficits (Gawthrop 1995:32).

The NDP won the 1991 election after the Socreds collapsed in the wake of the Vander Zalm scandal. Harcourt’s moderate approach was more centre-left than Barrett’s, but the NDP continued to increase social spending except during the final years of Harcourt’s term, when efforts were made to bring the deficit under control and improve the economy.

As mentioned at the top of the paper, Harcourt created the Ministry of Women’s Equality (MWE) that considerably improved policy for women. According to Gawthrop, from 1991-93, “the NDP managed to achieve more for women’s equality in two years than the Socreds did in the previous fifteen” (1995:129). As shown in Table 4, Harcourt appointed seven women to his cabinet (37 per cent) – at that point the highest percentage of women ever appointed to a BC cabinet – many of them feminists. The extra-parliamentary pro-feminist Women’s Committee also continued to be a strong influence on the party throughout the 1990s.

Yet, activists and party insiders interviewed for this study noted that the rhetoric of fiscal conservatism became more prevalent in the NDP in 1994 and following, threatening women’s policy issues.<sup>16</sup> Over time, Harcourt found it difficult to “walk the tightrope” between appeasing the core constituencies of the NDP and allaying the fears of business groups that were uncomfortable with a social democratic government. Harcourt resigned as leader and premier in 1995 following allegations against the party in the Bingogate scandal (Gawthrop 1996).

Glen Clark replaced Harcourt in early 1996. Clark’s election suggested the party would shift toward the labour left as it had periodically in its past. To the surprise of many, Clark’s NDP squeaked by the Liberals in the 1996 elections, which produced the first back-to-back NDP governments in BC history.<sup>17</sup>

Described by one writer as “arrogant, ideological and shamelessly partisan,” Glen Clark set out to put the party firmly on the economic/class-based left (Gawthrop 1996:347). As leader, Clark routinely “flash[ed] the class card” warning that “class warfare was coming to BC” (Schmidt 2000). This approach alienated middle-class NDP moderates who were more comfortable with Harcourt (Ibid). Clark’s left-wing approach was rooted in his longstanding ties to the union movement.

Women’s issues were less visible in the 1996 election than in the 1991 contest (Erickson 1996:121), and Clark was not as interested in them as Harcourt. In fact, Clark wanted to scrap the Ministry of Women’s Equality, but kept it in place after intense

<sup>16</sup> Confidential activist interviews 1999 - 2000.

<sup>17</sup> The Liberals ended up with a larger percentage of the popular vote than the NDP (Blake 1996b:121).

lobbying by NDP feminists.<sup>18</sup> Clark was viewed by one activist as “full of testosterone” and not a friend to the women’s movement.<sup>19</sup>

The number of women cabinet ministers remained steady, yet only one of these was given a senior cabinet post – Joy MacPhail in Health (Canadian News Facts 1997). In general, women’s issues failed to regain the profile they had under Harcourt. According to one activist, the NDP was simply “doing maintenance” on women’s issues under Clark.<sup>20</sup>

Clark’s tenure as premier came to an abrupt end in 1999, following more conflict of interest allegations this time involving a casino-licensing scandal. In 2000, the NDP chose former Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh as its leader. Dosanjh became Canada’s first Indo-Canadian premier. His attitudes towards women were more pro-feminist than Clark’s, a fact that was widely attributed to the influence of Dosanjh’s wife, a well-known feminist activist in the Indo-BC community.<sup>21</sup> Dosanjh was particularly “strong on social justice issues and passionate on fighting hate crimes and [those who] battered women” (DeCloet 1998).

Dosanjh’s administration differed from the later years of the Harcourt government as he “refused to bow to demands to focus all his energy on fixing the economy and worked to try to rebuild the NDP coalition,” including among the provincial women’s movement (Hunter 2000). Feminist women continued to be a strong presence in cabinet and Dosanjh promoted more women to senior posts, notably MacPhail who became the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education (Canadian News Facts 2000).

Forced to call an election in 2001, Dosanjh led the NDP to a stunning defeat. The party held only two seats in the legislature compared with 77 for the BC Liberals. Dosanjh lost his own seat in the process, so former cabinet minister Joy MacPhail assumed the leadership role.

### *The Liberal Party*

The BC Liberal Party shared the spotlight with the Conservatives<sup>22</sup> under a two-party system until the arrival of the CCF in 1933. The Liberals held power in the years through 1941, but a minority situation in that year forced them into a reluctant partnership with the Conservatives (Dyck 1996:604). The Liberals gained office again under a successful coalition arrangement with the Conservatives until the Socreds arrived on the scene and relegated them to political obscurity. During the years of Social Credit strength through the 1980s, the Liberal Party was forced into the political centre, distinguishing itself from both the Socreds and the NDP. Yet in BC’s polarized political system, there was no real support for a party in the centre. This was reflected in the Liberals’ low popular support during many elections, dipping as low as half a percent in 1979 (Carty 1996:341 Appendix A-4).

During the 1991 election, the Liberals underwent a resurgence in popular support, likely due to a weakening of Social Credit support following Bill Vander Zalm’s fall from grace, the Liberals’ shift to the right and the strong performance of Liberal leader Gordon Wilson during the 1991 leaders’ debate (Blake 1996:76-77). Gordon Campbell

<sup>18</sup> Confidential party activist Interview, September 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Confidential advocate interview, September 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Confidential Interview, December 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with party activist, December 2000.

<sup>22</sup> The BC Tories ceased to be a political force and effectively disappeared from competition after 1975 (Dyck 1996).

succeeded Wilson as party leader and substantially increased party membership with a decidedly more right-wing appeal. According to Blake, new members attracted by Campbell were significantly more right-wing, populist, and hostile to government spending increases than party members who had joined prior to 1991 (1996:78). His strong “pro-business outlook and conservative philosophy” shifted the party strongly to the right” (Ibid).

As the Liberals moved toward the right in 2000, they had more in common with “the policies of Conservative premiers Mike Harris and Ralph Klein than with those of [former Liberal Prime Minister] Jean Chrétien” (Gray 2001). Campbell’s election platform also avoided any mention of women’s issues. As mentioned above, shortly after the Liberals won the 2001 election, the Campbell government shut down the freestanding MWE. Table 5 shows that women formed 28.5% of Campbell’s cabinet. None of the eight women in it was publicly linked to the women’s movement. In fact, Lynn Stephens, the Liberal Minister of State for Women’s Equality, demonstrated particularly low levels of feminist consciousness when she was quoted in a 2001 press interview as saying that women were unequal due to “poor choices” and that low income women should just “make more money.”<sup>23</sup>

### **BC Partisan Openness to Women's Issues 1980-2002**

From the evidence above, there are a number of points in time where women's policy results would be more likely based on party attitudes, particularly focussed on levels of feminist consciousness. For the Social Credit Party, the years under Bill Bennett (1979-1986) were likely worse for women's issues than the years after 1987 under Bill Vander Zalm as the former was more committed to a right-wing, non-feminist philosophy and was not motivated to reach out to women's interests by possible electoral gain as was the case for the latter. Neither of these leaders, however, were as open to women's issues as were the three NDP Premiers Harcourt, Clark, and Dosanjh. Yet, it is possible to distinguish between these NDP regimes even further as feminist consciousness levels were stronger during the early 1990s under Harcourt than later in the mid-1990s as he attempted to hold onto office. The Clark years (1996-2000) were perhaps the least open of all the NDP years in office as Clark was more in tune with labour left and class interests than any related to feminism. This improved for a short while under Dosanjh (2000-2001), the final NDP premier of the period.

Opportunities for women unfortunately were lessened when the right assumed power in BC's polarized party system once again in 2001 under the Campbell Liberals. Low levels of feminist consciousness amongst the leader and key cabinet ministers exacerbated this situation even further.

### **Comparing Partisan Difference to Women's Policy Results in Ontario**

After establishing the relevant differences between the parties that have held power in Ontario between 1980 and 2002, it is now important to compare these to actual policy results in the chosen areas of women's policy - child care and violence against women.

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<sup>23</sup> Activist interview, October 2002.

**Table 7 – Ontario’s Significant Child Care and Anti-Violence Policies 1980-2002**

Year – Party	Policy/Program	+/- Rating
1981 – PC	All-Party Standing Committee on Social Development study the problem of violence against women	+
1982 – PC	All-party Standing Committee on Social Development releases First Report on Family Violence	+/-
1982 – PC	Ontario Solicitor General instructs provincial police chiefs to ensure incidents of domestic violence are investigated and charges are laid when evidence warrants	+
1985 – Lib/NDP	Child Care Initiatives in Enterprise Ontario implemented along with further increases in subsidy funding	+
1986 – Lib/NDP	Ontario Joint Family Violence Initiatives for a five-year term announced	+
1987 – Lib	New Directions for Child Care released including Direct Operating Grants offered to non-profit centres and private home day care to increase staff salaries and benefits. The 50% provincial share was also offered to commercial centres	+/-
1987 - Lib	\$7 million increase in family violence spending– includes first second stage funding	+/-
1991 – NDP	10 new sexual assault centres and more funding for 21 existing centres – total increase of 250% under Ontario Sexual Assault Prevention Initiative	+
1991 – NDP	Attorney General directive to Crown Attorneys to fight attempts to make victims’ sexual history admissible at trial	+
1991 – NDP	\$12 mil spent on wife assault prevention and \$8.3 mil on sexual assault prevention added to \$66 mil current spending in both areas	+
1991 – NDP	\$4.6 mil spent to improve accessibility of battered women shelters and 42 new beds includes some core funding	+
1991 – NDP	NDP announces Child Care Wage Enhancement Grant	+
1991 – NDP	The Child Care Conversion Program is announced	+/-
1992 – NDP	JobsOntario program initiated - child care	+
1992 – NDP	Additional \$11.5 mil to help prevent sexual assault	+
1995 – PC	100% of Ministry and Community and Social Services funding for counselling services for second stage shelters, education and prevention services, for provincial anti-violence advertising campaign, for counselling of male batterers and for culturally specific services was eliminated	-
1995 – PC	Early Years Program cancelled - child care	-
1995 – PC	JobsOntario child care subsidies reduced	-
1995 – PC	Funding supporting inclusion of child care facilities in new school sites cancelled	-
1995 – PC	Child Care Conversion Program cancelled	-
1995 – PC	Policy limiting new subsidies to non-profit child care programs was reversed	-
1996 – PC	\$4,500 pay cut for all child care workers in non-profit centres	-
1996 – PC	Improving Child Care in Ontario policy review released (the Ecker Report)	-
1996 – PC	Framework for action on the prevention of violence against women in Ontario is released (the McGuire Report).	-
1997 – PC	Prevention of Violence Against Women: An Agenda for Action released with \$27 mil in new funding for Violence Prevention Initiatives	+/-
1999 - PC	Child care base funding cut by \$11.8 mil per year to 2003	-
2000 – PC	Bill 117 Domestic Violence Protection Act introduced	+/-
2000 – PC	Funding to Ontario Women’s Centres is cut – Ottawa, North York, Windsor and Oakville	-
2001 - PC	Early Years Plan announced with federal transfer payments; no money allocated for child care and tightening of subsidy eligibility requirements	-

2001 – PC	\$4.5mil over 5 years for a province-wide crisis help line	+
2002 - PC	1,116 subsidized spaces cut	-
2002 – PC	\$21 mil to address domestic violence	+/-

+, -, +/- ratings established by the author.

Sources: Women's Movement Archives, Walker 1990, OAITH 1997, Lightman and Baines 1996, OWJN 2000, Cairns 2000, Canadian Press NewsWire 2000, Community Action 2001, Canada NewsWire 2001 & 2002, The Daily Press 2001, Whitnall 2001, Crosby 2004, Della-Mattia 2004, Leslie 2004, Livingston 2004, Provincial government documents, Internal party documents Sources: Kyle et. al. 1992, Jenson and Thompson 1999, Child Care Resource and Research Unit 2000, Monsebraaten 1989, OCBCC files, personal interviews, City of Toronto 2004, Campaign 2000 2004.

Table 7 combines the most significant child care and anti-violence policy programs and announcements made during the study period. Ratings of "+" for pro-feminist, "+/-" indicating the program was not entirely feminist and only partially responsive to movements, and "-" for anti-feminist negative responses, were made after consulting movement activists.<sup>24</sup> Due to space constraints, detailed explanations of the policy announcements below are not included in this analysis.<sup>25</sup>

As we can see by comparing the results in Table 7 to the partisan information above, there are a number of important trends that emerge confirming hypotheses generated earlier about Ontario government responsiveness to women's movements. Chronologically, the earlier years under PC Premier Bill Davis were not expected to be great for women's policy, but Davis' moderate centrality and willingness to govern by polls combined with women's movement strength in the early to mid-1980s left room for some improvements in women's policy. The evidence above shows, not surprisingly, that two pro-feminist policy responses and one mixed response occurred during Davis' last years in office.

Two positive policy responses during the Liberal/NDP Accord years along with two mixed responses during the subsequent Liberal majority years also follows from predictions made above that the Accord years would be more open to women's policy than when the Peterson Liberals governed on their own. It is a bit surprising that Peterson's tenure was not as fruitful for women as Davis' had been, considering they both exhibited similar ideological positions and similar levels of feminist consciousness.

The analysis above predicted that the NDP years under the leadership of Bob Rae would be the most successful for women and this is confirmed by the policy evidence in Table 7. Seven positive policy responses (the most by any government in Ontario) and only one mixed response was recorded between 1990-1995 when the NDP held office. Conversely, the partisan context analysis suggested that the worse years for women's policy would be under Mike Harris's neo-liberal, anti-feminist regime between 1995-2002. This too was confirmed by the policy data. All of the negative responses recorded in this period - 12 in total - occurred under the Harris government.<sup>26</sup>

### **Comparing Partisan Difference to Women's Policy Results in BC**

<sup>24</sup> The paper realizes that advocates can sometimes remain negative for strategic purposes, so these ratings were also weighed against past advocacy demands and comparatively over time. Ratings on levels of feminist responsiveness were determined by the author.

<sup>25</sup> For this more detailed analysis, see Collier 2006.

<sup>26</sup> No significant announcements were made under Frank Miller and only one mixed result was recorded under Ernie Eves, therefore the paper does not include these two PC leaders in the final analysis.

The paper now turns to a comparison of the partisan analysis in BC from 1980-2002 to measurable policy results for women in the fields of child care and violence against women.

**Table 8 – BC’s Significant Child Care and Anti-Violence Policies 1980-2002**

Year – Party	Policy/Program	+/- Rating
1981 - Socred	Day Care Grants Program starts – 227 grants totalling \$1.2 mil	+
1982 – Socred	Provincial Evaluation of the Coalition of BC Rape Crisis Centres	-
1983 – Socred	Vancouver Transition House loses provincial funding, forced to close	-
1984 – Socred	Wife Assault Policy announced	+/-
1984 - Socred	Start-up and Expansion Child Care Grants terminated	-
1989 – Socred	Maximum child care subsidy rates increased by 15%	+
1990 – Socred	Task Force on Child Care created	+
1990 – Socred	25% budget increase to shelter funding to increase beds from 400 to 500	+
1991 – Socred	Task Force on Family Violence formed	+
1991 – NDP	Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 1990s report of the Task Force is released	+
1992 – NDP	Child Care Branch of the Ministry of Women’s Equality established.	+
1992 – NDP	Infant/Toddler Incentive Grant Program established	+
1992 – NDP	BC 21 Child Care Expansion Initiative created - \$32 mil over 3 years	+
1992 – NDP	Facilities and Equipment Grant Programs established	+
1992 – NDP	BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance Programs established and funded by the province	+
1992 – NDP	Ministry of Women’s Equality is created by NDP and Stopping the Violence Initiative is announced including \$10 mil in new funding per year for next four years	+
1992 - NDP	BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses and Vancouver Transition House receive core funding	+
1992 – NDP	Increases in second stage housing funding - violence	+
1993 – NDP	Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy – third revision of Wife Assault Policy	+/-
1993 – NDP	Provincial Child Care Council established	+
1994 – NDP	Wage Supplement Initiative made available to eligible non-profit and for-profit child care programs	+
1994 – NDP	2% wage increase for transition house staff and other anti-violence counselling agencies	+
1995 – NDP	Quality Enhancement Grants/Needs Assessment and Local Planning Grants discontinued	-
1995 – NDP	Child Care Strategic Initiatives implemented - \$32 mil cost-shared with federal government for innovative child program delivery (4 year project)	+
1995 – NDP	Wage Supplement Initiative and Infant Toddler Grants frozen	-
1996 – NDP	BC Benefits (Child Care) Act introduced to replace GAIN Act	+/-
1996/97 – NDP	Ministry of Children and Families created and child care moved under that ministry	+/-
1999 – NDP	Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security created and child care	+/-

	moved under that ministry	
1999 – NDP	Building a Better Future for British Columbia’s Kids released by MWE and SDES – consultation paper	+
2000/2001 – NDP	Seven-dollar-a-day before and after school program for grades 1 to age 12 introduced - Child Care BC Act	+
2001 - Lib	Child Care BC Act and Seven-dollar-a-day program cancelled	-
2001 – Lib	MWE eliminated and incorporated into Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services	-
2001 – Lib	40% cut to Legal Aid Program - violence	-
2002 - Lib	Income level for child care subsidy qualification reduced	-
2002 – Lib	Welfare benefits significantly reduced, time limits placed on ability to collect income assistance - violence	-
2002 – Lib	Core funding cut from Women’s Centres (by Mar 31/04)	-

+, -, +/- ratings established by the author.

Sources: Women’s Movement Archives, provincial government documents, Walker 1990, Sigurdson 1996, Kachuk 1998, Leavitt 2002, Canada NewsWire 2003, BCIFV 2002 & 2005, BCCWC 2005, Creese and Strong-Boag 2005, Griffin et. al. 1992, Jenson and Thompson 1999, Child Care Resource and Research Unit 2000.

As with the comparison for Ontario, many of the hypotheses generated earlier about party government openness to women's issues in BC are confirmed by the data in Table 8, but not all of them follow expected patterns. Beginning with the Bill Bennett Socreds, there was an expectation that Bennett would not be very open to women's issues and during his tenure he delivered three negative announcements, one mixed and unexpectedly, one that was positive. When Bill Vander Zalm took over as Socred leader and Premier in 1986, expectations were higher that more would be done for women near the end of his tenure as Vander Zalm reached out to women on the advice of party insiders. The fact that four positive policy responses were recorded between 1986 and 1991 show that indeed Vander Zalm was open to women's issues in the lead-up to the provincial election in 1991. Perhaps the best way to explain these positive responses and the related lack of mixed or negative responses during these years, was the input of a feminist minister who despite holding a junior post for Women's Programs, was able to generate results as the party reached out to women for potential electoral gain.

The most positive period occurred under Mike Harcourt's NDP regime from 1991-1996. Harcourt's government recorded the most positive policy responses of any single government - a total of 13. However, the partisan analysis noted a tempering off period near the end of Harcourt's term which resulted in one mixed and two negative responses noted in Table 8. Things did not improve from the end of Harcourt's term through Glen Clark's years as leader from 1996-2000. Clark's labour left approach helps us understand the three mixed responses recorded under his leadership, although feminist members within the extraparliamentary party could likely be credited with the lone positive response recorded and the fact that no further negative NDP responses occurred. This lack of negative responses continued under Ujjal Dosanjh's leadership. Despite higher personal feminist consciousness levels, the Dosanjh government only recorded one positive response.

The final government in BC during the study period was the right-wing Gordon Campbell Liberals. Expectations were low as far as feminist responsiveness was concerned and Campbell certainly did not defy those expectations. Six negative responses, the most of the study period, occurred under Campbell's watch with no significant positive or mixed responses during these years.

### **Conclusion: Comparing Ontario and BC**

In the end, most of the predictions made about party government openness to women's movement interests between 1980 and 2002 in both Ontario and BC were born out by the policy evidence presented in Tables 7 and 8. While left and right-wing labels can help us understand when governments are more apt to respond positively to feminist women's movements, this analysis was clearly improved by the addition of measurements of feminist consciousness levels within those same parties. This study confirms others that argue the left is most often the best party for women. We saw this clearly demonstrated in both Ontario and BC with NDP regimes enacting the most positive pro-feminist policies of the study period. It also showed that the most negative policy responses were most likely to occur under right-wing anti-feminist regimes.

However, this study goes one step further by helping us understand when the left is not as open as it could be or used to be (the Clark NDP and later Harcourt NDP years are illustrative of these points) because of the feminist consciousness measurements included in the partisan analysis. When governments of the left are constrained by labour left interests or electoral concerns and pressures from the right, positive responses are less likely and a few negative responses may result. On the other hand, stronger feminist consciousness levels either within key areas of the parliamentary party itself (as we saw with ministers in the Vander Zalm Socred government) or with electoral pressures from strong women's movements (also with Vander Zalm and with the end of Bill Davis's Conservative tenure in Ontario), can also help explain times when right-wing regimes are more open to women's issues than would otherwise have been expected.

Of course it is important to acknowledge the limited nature of these findings. By examining only two aspects of partisan difference, the study does not fully account for other potential factors, partisan or otherwise, that can impact government policy decision-making.<sup>27</sup> As well, even though child care and anti-violence policy have been key demands of the Canadian women's movement, they are only part of the wider scope of lobbying efforts by the movement aimed at ending women's discrimination in society. The study does not account for other women's policy issues, nor does it address the issue of intersectionality within the women's movement and how this is addressed or not addressed by party governments - another important aspect of women's movement lobbying. It is also difficult to definitively measure partisan left-right orientations or feminist consciousness levels using secondary and interview source material as was done with this study. While survey data may help enrich this type of study, on its own it also suffers from methodological limitations. Finally, by confining the study to two provinces, this also limits how broadly the findings can be generalized beyond these two cases. Questions of whether these conclusions would hold in less polarized party systems where the left is not electorally successful are also not answered by this study. Regardless of these limitations, I believe this study still adds to our understanding of how parties actually impact women's policy results, even though it may be incomplete. In the very least, it suggests further research that includes measurements of feminist consciousness levels within parties to help better understand state responsiveness to women's movement claims.

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<sup>27</sup> Two of these, impact of social movements and socioeconomic factors, are included in Collier 2006.

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