

**Fighting Elections: An Example of Cross-Level Political Party Integration in  
Canada**

Paper for presentation at the Canadian Political Science Association  
University of British Columbia  
Friday, June 6, 2008

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## **Abstract**

To this point, conventional wisdom on the structure of political parties in Canada has emphasized their confederal nature. In other words (and with the exception of the New Democratic Party), parties with identical partisan affiliation at the federal and provincial levels still operate in “two political worlds” and, as a result, have few integrating links. This may be true in terms of certain organizational aspects of the Liberal and Conservative parties. For instance, finances, headquarters, constitutions, constituency associations, and even decisions on policy are often kept strictly separate from their political “cousins” across the federal divide. However, this chasm is not maintained in other aspects of party structure and operations. From research gathered in four provinces, this paper will argue that a key integrating link between political party affiliates can be found in the way they fight elections, particularly in terms of shared activists (the party professionals, campaign managers, strategists, paid organizers, and party staff) and expertise (especially technological expertise). Left unstudied by most academics, the way in which political parties engage in electoral battle reveals a fair extent of cross-level collaboration, accommodation, and cooperation. In defiance of popular thought, then, political parties that share the same label, and the activists that work within them, have a common goal to help their “party” win government, whether that be at the federal or provincial level. This has the effect of shrinking the space between partisan affiliates and challenges the notion that Canada’s federal system has led to increasingly disentangled political parties.

*“There’s nothing that brings people together more than fighting an identified, consistent enemy. That’s what really ties you together.”*

Doug Tyler, former provincial minister and Liberal party activist in New Brunswick.

## Introduction

How political parties fight elections in Canada provides an interesting contrast to the accepted view that, across the federal-provincial divide, they are disentangled organizations (Bakvis and Tanguay, 2008, 129; Dyck, 1991, 162; Stewart and Carty, 2006, 97; Wolinetz and Carty, 2006, 54). Most students of Canadian political parties agree that, unlike the tightly knit groups that existed in the first half of the twentieth century, parties that share a label at the provincial and federal level have since grown apart. In short, organizational independence is assumed; parties have simply succumbed to the demands of disciplined parliamentary government and those institutions of Canadian federalism that leave little room for provincial representation (Cairns, 1979, 6; Wolinetz and Carty, 2006, 67). As a result, provincial parties also became the champions of provincial interests. When policy clashes with the federal government inevitably occurred, a differentiated form of organization allowed party cousins to compete with one another for public support (Painter, 1991, 269). Disassociation also meant that, when necessary, parties could distinguish themselves from an unpopular affiliate at the other level.

For most parties, however, there has never been complete detachment. In the Liberal party, for instance, there are formal links in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The New Democratic Party is also an integrated organization. The unifying links that remain between differentiated federal and provincial party cousins primarily involve party activists (sharing members) and are considered to be informal (Carty, 1994; Dyck, 1991, 164). Of course, an informal link can still be significant. The online edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines a partisan as “[a]n adherent or proponent of a party, cause, person, etc.; especially a devoted or zealous supporter” (<http://dictionary.oed.com>). Party activists (both regular members and party professionals) embody this definition and for many their ties are to the same party label at both levels of government (Esselment, 2007).<sup>1</sup> Most will fight elections on behalf of “their” party, regardless of whether the battle is being waged provincially or nationally. Aside from historical accounts when political parties were relatively integrated, there has been no systematic study of how parties that share a label fight elections; in other words, we do not know whether, and to what extent, party cousins today will stretch their organizations across the federal-provincial divide in order to help the other win an election. If electoral cooperation between parties does occur, the “informal” link between party cousins may take on greater meaning.

By examining cross-level electoral cooperation between Conservative and Liberal parties in New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, this paper argues that party activists and elections serve as critical connections between party cousins and has the effect of producing considerable integration between parties at the

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<sup>1</sup> Party professionals are people who work in politics full-time and are usually, but not always, employed either by the party directly (such as an executive director) or by representatives and party leaders in Parliament. A party professional will often be extensively involved in the planning and execution of a party’s central campaign and, afterwards, may accept a job as a senior advisor to the leader or as a senior staffer for a minister. For a good discussion of party professionals, see: Webb, Paul and Robin Kolodny, 2006. Along with the term party professional, this paper will use “political professional” and “elite activist” interchangeably.

federal and provincial level. Electoral collaboration between party wings occurs in a number of different ways, parties sometimes *depend* on this type of cooperation, and party activists at the professional level will encourage and facilitate electoral collaboration and cooperation in order to help the party at the other level win government. The paper concludes by observing that political parties do reach across the federal divide to work cooperatively during elections and that this forges unity between them. While there are definite obstacles to electoral collaboration, these parties are working to maintain and *strengthen* their ties with their partisan affiliate at the other level.

After a brief overview of the methodology, this paper will set out a theoretical framework to conceptualize cooperation. Next, it will outline ways in which party cousins collaborate. An examination of the extent of electoral collaboration in the four provinces will follow. The paper concludes with an examination of barriers to cooperation and thoughts on where research on coordinated campaigning across the levels can lead.

### **Methodology**

This research is based on interviews with 21 professional party activists in the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), and the provincial Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties in each of the four provinces under scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> On average, each interview lasted for 90 minutes and some of the activists were interviewed several times. Each interview was taped and the discussion later transcribed. This paper uses a number of quotes from the participants but their anonymity has been respected with regard to direct attribution. Questions posed to the participants were with regard to the following elections: the 2004 and 2006 federal campaigns, the 2006 New Brunswick election, the 2003 and 2007 Ontario elections, the 2003 and 2007 Saskatchewan elections, and the 2005 election in British Columbia.

While 21 interviews may seem too few, I was often reminded that there are only a small number of elite political organizers in Canada. Those who have control over a national or provincial campaign are often the only ones with the authority to release manpower, agree to endorsements by leaders, provide tour assistance, organize supportive rallies, and provide technical support, among other aids, to a cousin at the other level. Admittedly, one could cast the interview net more widely. When I did this, I usually uncovered the same information and was repeatedly referred back to the same names to get the “best” information on the topic. In some provinces, however, finding the “right” people to interview was more difficult than others. I was least familiar with the elite party professionals in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. I am most familiar with them in Ontario. I have, however, put faith in the party activists who have referred me to their colleagues and trust that I have been able to accurately portray how electoral collaboration occurs in each of these provinces.

### **Leaders’ Entourages and the Policy/Organization Divide in a Campaign**

In order to conceptualize how parties are even able to coordinate electoral cooperation, a framework is needed. Campaign coordination can be a significant

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<sup>2</sup> The Saskatchewan Party is treated as the “conservative” party in Saskatchewan.

undertaking, particularly in large provinces. To whom, for instance, would a provincial party direct a request for assistance? Likewise, who in a federal party would be responsible for ensuring that the necessary support is delivered?

Sid Noel's (2007) theoretical work on a leader's "entourage" is a helpful starting point. An entourage is the small collection of loyal individuals that surround a leader.<sup>3</sup> In most cases, members of the entourage are expert political professionals who provide specialized services that help leaders win leadership contests (206). If successful, the entourage will provide the same support for that leader during an election by taking on key roles in a central campaign, such as campaign management and strategy, fundraising, polling, policy direction, and communications advice, to name a few.<sup>4</sup> Because these jobs require different skills, the entourage itself can be divided into two groups or teams. The first group primarily concerns itself with policy. The policy advisors develop a campaign platform that contains "promises" with wide appeal.<sup>5</sup> They ensure that the leader and candidates have good briefing notes on the policies, that talking points are attached, that proposals are clearly costed and fall within budget, and any policy attacks by the opposition can be rebuffed.

The second group concentrates on electoral strategy and tactics; in other words, they are focused on campaign organization. These professionals will develop an overarching campaign theme, target "winnable" ridings, send workers to certain constituencies, plan the leader's tour, make campaign adjustments depending on polling information, approve or disapprove campaign ads, and determine which portions of the electorate will receive a focused appeal.

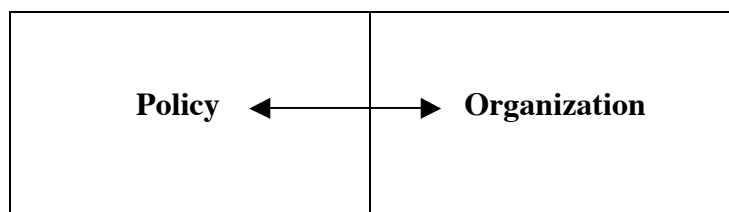
These two groups within the leader's circle (policy and organization) work together on a campaign. There is a high level of communication between them to ensure party policies are consistent with the overall message of the campaign and that they appeal to the party's targeted voters and ridings. As the groups themselves have very different tasks, some members of the entourage will have a foot in both camps (such as the campaign manager or director of communications) to facilitate electoral coordination between them. The functional division is displayed graphically below, with the arrows indicating the degree of coordination between the two:

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<sup>3</sup> According to Noel (2007), the inner circle of the entourage rarely exceeds ten people and the outer circle no more than thirty (205).

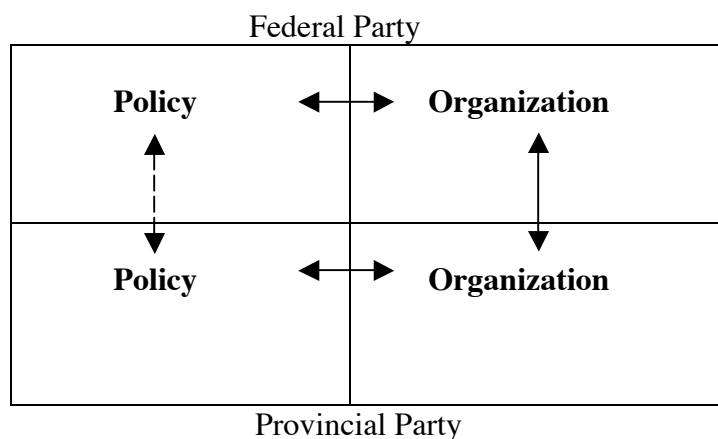
<sup>4</sup> In Canada, the elite group that surrounds a leader is loyal both to the leader and to the party. Most would be members of the political party itself (party activists), may be employed as staff to the leader or party, and only provide their services to leaders within that particular party. This is generally similar to the US (Dulio, 2004; Sabato, 1981) although professional political consultants work in a candidate-centred system where the continuous election cycle means that one's career can be built solely on political campaign consulting. Many political consultants in the US have previously worked for either a state, local, or national party committee. When they move into the private sector, consultants usually confine their services to either Republican or Democrat candidates (Dulio, 2004, 50-53; Thurber, Nelson, and Dulio, 2000, 12-13; Matalin and Carville, 1994; Kinsella, 2007, 75).

<sup>5</sup> The policies often, but not always, derive from resolutions passed at the party's policy or annual conventions.



Primary research from this project suggests that both federal and provincial parties appear to replicate this set-up. The elite group of people who prepare and execute central campaigns tend to fall into one of these two categories: those who work intensely on policy and those who work primarily on campaign organization. The people within these groups are political professionals loyal to both leader and party. Some of them will float between these groups while others remain firmly within their field of expertise.

For federal and provincial parties with identical partisan affiliation, it makes intuitive sense that there should be interactions between the professionals across the levels to coordinate campaigns to help “their party” win. In part this is because there are only a small number of elite activists in Canada in the first place. Many of the political professionals who work on campaigns know their counterparts at the other level (in fact, many have worked on campaigns together). In other words, since parties share both voters and members (Esselment, 2007), and if we accept the definition of partisanship as rooted in loyalty to one’s party, then collaboration would be expected. In the ideal case, the diagram detailing the integrative relationship of electoral collaboration between party cousins would look like this:



There is obviously a connection between the policy and organization people at their respective levels, indicated by the horizontal arrow pointing in both directions. Again, policies will be devised to “target” certain groups in the electorate (teachers, multicultural communities, women, parents, etc) and there will be a great deal of coordination back and forth between the policy and campaign organization groups within a party.

It would also be expected that the organization groups of the provincial and federal parties would communicate extensively both before and during an election

campaign, indicated by the arrows crossing vertically in the diagram. Federal party organizers often need manpower (in the form of constituency campaign managers, provincial tour advisors, MPP or MLA involvement in canvassing, election-day coordinators) technical resources, and fundraising assistance to help them win an election. To that end, a provincial party cousin can make a contribution by accessing its own resources and activating them on behalf of the federal party.<sup>6</sup> The same can be true of provincial parties needing federal party assistance. The organization groups can coordinate a shared effort in this respect.

However, there is often little connection between the policy groups at the federal and provincial levels. This is to allow room for “provincial interests” which often require party cousins to distance themselves from each other when necessary. Provincial parties, particularly those that have formally separated from their federal counterpart, do not want to be told what policies are desirable by the federal party. Provincial policies must be devised to fit provincial jurisdictions, the particular ideology of party members, and what is perceived to be electorally palatable. A provincial party may take policy stances that grate against the policies of their federal counterpart. The dotted line between the policy groups suggests that in some cases forewarning may be given about harmful policy announcements (provincial tax hikes before a federal election, for example) or, conversely, one party cousin may avoid policy announcements altogether that may cause the other harm during an election. Complete party integration would be necessary to have a solid line connecting the policy groups on the vertical axis.

With the theoretical framework that conceptualizes “electoral collaboration” in mind, the next section sets out the various ways party cousins can cooperate during elections. Afterwards, the paper will examine to what extent this occurs in Canada between Conservative and Liberal parties.<sup>7</sup>

### **Types of Cooperation**

Electoral cooperation can take various forms, but ten broad categories have been identified as the most common ways party cousins will help each other fight elections. Coordination in each of these areas is usually achieved through the political professionals in a leader’s entourage.

#### *1. Sharing activists*

Activists are the backbone of political parties and, where possible, party activists tend to belong to the same party at both levels of government (Esselment, 2007). As a result,

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<sup>6</sup> The “action-set” is a second component of Noel’s theoretical work on entourages. An action-set is a “collection of individuals among whom prior links of some kind exist, who are (or can be) linked to a leader through intermediaries, and who can be politically activated on the leader’s behalf” (2007, 208). Individuals in a particular action-set can be linked by religious or ethnic affiliation, by business connections, or by association with the party. Action-sets in place to support a provincial or federal leader can be encouraged by that particular leader’s entourage to support a party affiliate at the other level. More directly, the elite activists can direct their immediate resources (party staff, for example) to manage constituency campaigns, among other things, for candidates at the other level.

<sup>7</sup> Again, in the interests of space, this paper will not delve into campaign coordination within the NDP. Suffice it say that, by virtue of its integrated structure, the federal and provincial wings of the New Democratic Party (NDP) engage in intense electoral collaboration and this varies little from province to province (Quebec excepted) (See: Whitehorn, 2004, 106-138).



most will fight elections on behalf of “their” party regardless of whether the election battle is at the provincial or federal level. This type of cooperation is the driving force behind many campaigns. While political professionals have least control over volunteers on the ground, most have found that the same people consistently come out to campaign. If necessary, the elite activists can activate action-sets of elected officials loyal to their leader and, through them, encourage constituency-level activists to support a provincial or federal party during an election. Leading by example, party leaders and their elected officials will often support their party cousin by endorsing its leader and her field of candidates, canvassing with a candidate, and attending fundraisers.

Secondly, party professionals will also encourage - and sometimes direct - party staffers (either at party headquarters or legislative staff) to work for the cousin during the election. These staff activists will often be “loaned” to the other party to help manage campaigns or provide logistical or advance support to a leader’s tour.

Likewise, political professionals themselves will often move from one level to another to provide a central campaign with expertise in numerous areas. This may involve setting up and running a war room, writing a platform, or offering advice on poll results. Additionally, people paid by federal parties to organize in provinces may be asked to redirect their efforts to a provincial campaign in order to boost an affiliate’s electoral chances.

## *2. Technology*

A second form of collaboration is based on technology. Parties across the federal-provincial divide will often share software that assists in identifying voters. They may also employ the same companies for contacting voters and share phone banks for use by their own volunteers. Party affiliates may borrow IT experts from the other level to help with troubleshooting computer programs during the election, or for managing an election website. The Conservative Party of Canada, for example, runs a “campaign university” that is based on a video-conferencing system. Conservatives from across the country, whether federally or provincially oriented, can be involved and receive training through this program.

## *3. Networking Conferences*

Thirdly, parties cooperate to share best practices and educate each other in campaign techniques. Open to activists at both levels, large conferences are planned to bring together individuals interested in many aspects of campaigning, such as how to interact with the media or to clarify electoral rules, such as legislation governing the raising and spending of election funds. Similarly, federal parties will also send their own campaign experts directly to individual provinces for a more concise sharing of successful campaign strategies.

## *4. Policy announcements*

Parties have also been known to time good news policy announcements for the benefit of their campaigning (or soon to be campaigning) cousins. Likewise, policy announcements that may harm the electoral chances of an affiliate may be delayed or avoided altogether.

### *5. Fundraising*

While strict financing laws guide the manner in which election money is raised and spent, it is not uncommon for elected officials to help a counterpart at a fundraising event by encouraging her own activists to attend or by being a guest speaker to attract a wider audience. Along the same vein, party cousins will extend courtesies to one another by not holding fundraisers at the same time.

### *6. Platform*

In those provinces where parties are particularly close or even integrated, counterparts may work together on an election platform. In these cases there will often be similarities in the campaign documents, if not in substance then certainly in style.

### *7. Message support*

Parties with identical partisan affiliation may also support one another on the “messages” contained in the other’s campaign. This usually occurs through elected officials and can reinforce a key plank of the platform, or remedy a gaffe that could potentially send the campaigning party off its main messages.

### *8. Infrastructure*

While not as common, some parties have been able to share infrastructure, particularly in the form of housing their headquarters together. Both parties save money on rent and administrative staff.

### *9. Structural connection*

A structural connection between party cousins is also a less common form of cooperation, but it does exist. In this case, a person from one level is designated to be the liaison between the two parties. He or she performs the task of informing the party at the other level about election readiness preparations and where help is needed to fill gaps in campaign strategy. Ideally, the party being informed then organizes to ensure the cousin has the resources it needs to mount an effective campaign.

### *10. Candidate recruitment*

A final category of cooperation involves candidate recruitment. Where a party may be weak in a certain riding, an incumbent member at the other level may be approached to help find a good candidate. Likewise, cooperation also takes the form of standing agreements preventing party cousins from “poaching” each other’s candidates.

With these ten categories in mind, to what extent does electoral cooperation occur in each of the four provinces?

## **New Brunswick**

### *The Progressive Conservative Party*

Of the four provinces examined here, political parties in New Brunswick are an example of being the most cooperative across the levels. On the Conservative side, recent elections have revealed that cooperation occurs primarily through activists, but

platforms, policy announcements, and message support have also involved a collaborative effort. In the 2004 and 2006 federal elections, for example, Premier Bernard Lord endorsed the CPC and its leader, Stephen Harper. Leading by example, he successfully encouraged his caucus and provincial activists to work on the federal campaign.<sup>8</sup> According to an activist at both the federal and provincial levels:

Lord had his provincial caucus working for local Conservative candidates...MLAs, they have their own organizations and...they'll go out and work the doors and they'll say "I'll deliver these polls for you" (a).

The party professionals in Mr. Lord's office provided logistical and advance support to Harper's tour team. They also helped plan campaign events for the federal leader in New Brunswick in order to maximize their success. Support on messaging was also crucial; when a CPC candidate mused disparagingly about bilingualism in the Maritime province, it was Bernard Lord who defended Mr. Harper's commitment to bilingualism.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the provincial Premier and his team supported the CPC's positions on reforming the Senate and child care (Yourk, 2004, June 26; Ibbitson, 2006, January 18). Equally effective, Mr. Lord and the provincial party often went on the offensive against Liberal leader Paul Martin (Gordon, 2005, December 7).

During the August 2006 provincial election, the CPC worked equally hard for the provincial party. The same Conservative activists in New Brunswick canvassed on behalf of the provincial party and paid federal organizers were directed to help write the platform and bring out supporters identified from the federal election six months earlier.<sup>10</sup> Local MPs and some ministers campaigned enthusiastically with provincial candidates (McHardie, 2006, September 2). More direct cooperation came in the form of policy announcements. As prime minister, Mr. Harper was in a position to boost the provincial party's chances using federal government resources. Three announcements were made in the spring of 2006: a new stadium for Moncton, the clean up of Saint John Harbour, and an investment in the Trans-Canada highway. In total, the initiatives were worth \$210 million.<sup>11</sup> At each announcement, the Prime Minister spoke of Bernard Lord in glowing terms.<sup>12</sup> In the words of a senior Conservative:

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<sup>8</sup> At a Moncton rally for the CPC, Mr. Lord declared: "I'm campaigning as hard as I campaign for myself" (Ibbitson, 2006, January 18).

<sup>9</sup> Later, on December 3, 2007, Bernard Lord was appointed by the prime minister as Special Advisor for the Consultations on Linguistic Duality and Official Languages (see: Prime Minister announces Bernard Lord will lead Cross-Canada Official Languages consultations (2007, December 3). Retrieved May 20, 2008 from <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=1&id=1923>).

<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, the NB PC party's "5 in 5 Initiatives" platform was obviously reminiscent of the CPC's "five priorities" mantra during the 2006 election (*Getting Results Together*, 2006 General Election Platform. Retrieved February 26, 2008, from <http://www.pcnb.ca/content/216647>).

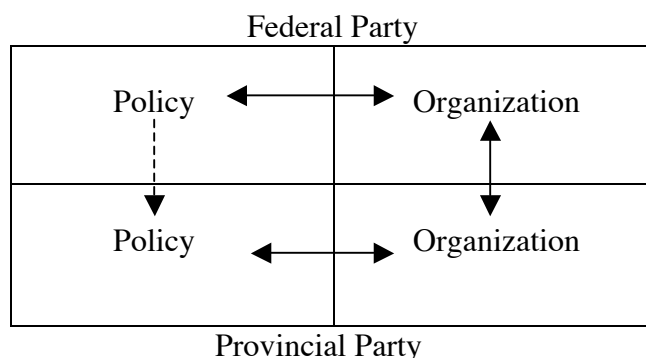
<sup>11</sup> The bulk of this, \$200 million for highway infrastructure, was over a 10-year period.

<sup>12</sup> For example, at one announcement Harper stated: "[I]n the weeks, months, *and hopefully years, ahead*, my Government will continue to work with Premier Lord in cleaning up Saint John Harbour" (emphasis added). See: Prime Minister announces federal funding to clean up Saint John Harbour (2006, March 24). Retrieved November 6, 2007 from <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=1&id=1072>).

We did everything we could with federal resources to help Lord win - it was pure partisanship. We tried to set the stage for his provincial campaign success (b).

While the New Brunswick Progressive Conservative party did not win the 2006 election, it was not from a lack of coordinated effort with the CPC. The ties between the two parties remain close. Most recently, Mr. Lord attended and spoke at a networking conference of Conservatives in February, 2008 (Taber, 2008, February 28).

The electoral collaboration between the New Brunswick PC party and the CPC could be illustrated this way:



There is the usual collaboration on each level between the policy and organization groups. There is also a fair amount of cooperation between the organization groups at the provincial and federal levels, evidenced by coordinating canvassing efforts with MPs and MLAs and using federal organizers to help with provincial campaign strategy. Furthermore, there is also communication on policy although the directional arrow indicates a lack of equality in the relationship. The assistance on policy, while weak, flows from the federal level downward.

### *The Liberal Party*

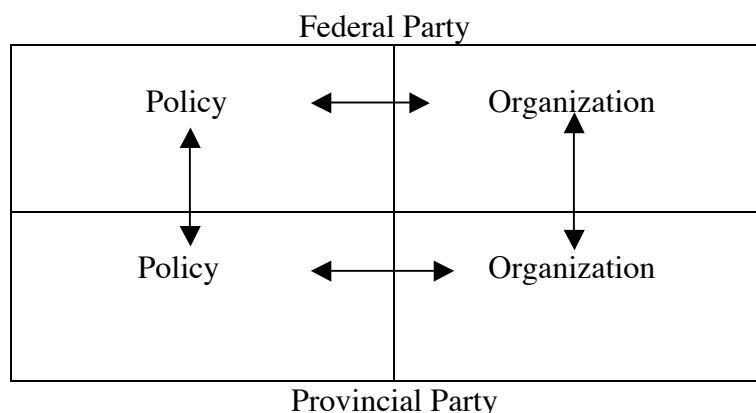
Much like the Conservative parties, relationships between the federal and provincial wings of the Liberal party are close in New Brunswick. The professional party activists managing and directing campaigns provincially are often the same people doing similar jobs federally. In fact, as an integrated association, there is little distinction between the levels. The Liberal Association is served by a single party executive (president, executive director and so on) and party staff. This facilitates cooperation since the integrated party structure permits the “machine” to pivot towards the federal or provincial level, depending on where resources are needed. In addition to joint fundraising and consultation on platforms, the association shares membership and donor lists, and polling results that reveal information critical to one level or the other are usually made available to the affected wing. The bulk of cooperative campaign efforts, however, involves sharing Liberal activists on the ground. All members will get involved nominating candidates and, when the election is underway, they will canvass neighbourhoods, pound in signs, and get out the vote on Election Day.

Likewise, close affiliation between Liberal MPs and MLAs often results in mutual support during a campaign, with most attending the other’s nomination meetings,

endorsing candidates, and participating in election events. By extension, Liberal leaders consistently support one another during elections. In fact, even policy disagreements have little effect dissuading leaders from participating in a campaign.<sup>13</sup> Of course, sometimes cooperation will take a low profile. According to one activist:

[Elected members] will work in whatever is the best interest of the candidate. If I'm the Minister of Health and I've closed a hospital in your riding, it's probably not good that I'm at all involved in your campaign. The fact that you're not involved is likely a decision that has been made in the best interest of the party (c).

Downplaying a policy issue, or refraining from aggravating the issue by staying out of sight during an election, is an important aspect of how the Liberal association collaborates across the federal divide. Even with occasional policy divergence, the partisanship of the activists continues to drive cooperation to ensure the electoral success of their counterparts. Electoral cooperation between the Liberal parties in New Brunswick could be presented this way:



Naturally, the policy and organization groups work together on their respective levels. Vertically, however, the organizational teams also work together closely. The same people are often in charge of campaigns at both levels and they can also galvanize the ground troops for whatever election may be called. Furthermore, while policy differences may arise, there is nonetheless communication between the two policy groups on policy directions and aspects of the election platform. As an integrated association in a small province, electoral collaboration among a tight group of activists is simply the norm.

## **Ontario**

### *The Progressive Conservative Party*

As in New Brunswick, the Ontario party system mirrors the federal one closely. The two parties that most often trade the seat of power are the Liberals and the Conservatives. Conservative partisans in this province have historically enjoyed a close

<sup>13</sup> For example, Premier Frank McKenna disagreed with John Turner on the issue of free trade and with Jean Chrétien on the Meech Lake Accord. In spite of this, he and the provincial wing delivered seats for the federal party in New Brunswick in the 1988 and 1993 general elections.

relationship with the federal party and, particularly since the merger of the federal PC party with the Canadian Alliance, this trend has continued.

Cooperation during campaigns has occurred in number of ways, but again focuses primarily on sharing people at different levels. A senior campaign official for the Conservative Party of Canada confirmed that, in Ontario:

The majority of people are members of both parties and usually will come out to help whether the election is provincial or federal (d).<sup>14</sup>

The two Conservative parties also encourage - and sometimes direct - their staffers (those who work for the party, in the legislature for Conservative members, and paid organizers in the field) to get out and campaign for the Conservative side during an election campaign. Staffers with experience managing campaigns or communications will often work in local ridings where help is needed most. Paid organizers working for a cousin can provide invaluable assistance securing a get-out-the-vote (GOTV) plan, or setting up a leader's tour, for example. On election day, provincial party headquarters and the staffers at Queen's Park will be "noticeably absent" because they will all be working on getting voters to the polls. In the 2006 federal election, campaign co-chair for the CPC John Reynolds was confident about the support the federal party would be receiving from its provincial cousins:

Every province where there's a Tory Premier and some that don't - including Ontario - will send provincial workers to help out with the federal campaign. It's going to be a big difference. Our on-the-ground troops are solid right across the country (Galloway, 2005, November 21).

In return, Prime Minister Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament until October 16<sup>th</sup> coincided nicely with the timing of the Ontario provincial election, giving MPs and their staff time to work on the Newfoundland and Ontario provincial campaigns (Laghi and Curry, 2007, September 5).

Another shared resource is the party professionals themselves. The party's best campaign directors, strategists, communications people, and 'war room' gurus are used predominantly in the central campaign or the "air war" (Cross, 2004, 122-125). The sharing of this top talent is not new. Dalton Camp, Norm Atkins, Senator Lowell Murray, Nancy McLean, John Lashchinger, David McLaughlin, Patrick Kinsella, and Geoff Norquay are a few loyal Conservative professionals who have served on federal and provincial central campaigns (Camp, 1970; Laschinger and Stevens, 1992). These people are indispensable because they have the expertise to run solid, winning campaigns and when their services are offered, both provincial and federal parties welcome the advice.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This is facilitated by constituency boundary overlap in Ontario. Ridings are replicated at the federal and provincial level and so volunteers canvass the same neighbourhoods and talk to the same people whether the campaign is for the provincial or federal party.

<sup>15</sup> This is not to suggest that all the party professionals get along personally. In fact, there have been instances where one professional will choose not to take a prominent role in a campaign if it is being directed by someone he dislikes.

As a corollary to sharing political professionals, the 2006 federal election also witnessed three provincial MPPs (two sitting members and one former member) run for federal office. John Baird, Jim Flaherty, and Tony Clement successfully won their seats for the CPC and all three became cabinet members.<sup>16</sup> Peter Van Loan, formally the President of the Ontario PC Party, also ran in 2006 and became the Government House Leader. In addition, there was an influx into Ottawa of former Queen's Park Conservative staffers who took up positions in the new Conservative federal government. "Ottawa *is* Queen's Park", observed one senior Conservative official. The flow of staff was welcomed by Harper and his government because the staffers from Ontario's Legislative Assembly brought with them expertise in government, something which the CPC was sorely lacking.

As in New Brunswick, the party leaders themselves provide campaign assistance. During the tenure of Conservative premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, the federal parties were split on the right and a fine balance was needed to keep conservative support together in Ontario. From 1993 to 2003, divided loyalties among Ontario Progressive Conservatives presented a challenge to cooperation. Some Ontario PCs became members of the Reform Party and, later, the Canadian Alliance. Others maintained their loyalty and memberships to the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. Attempts by the elite activists surrounding Mike Harris or Ernie Eves to provide electoral support to either federal party could have had a detrimental impact on the provincial party's own base of support. This was to be avoided and, as a result, cooperation across the levels during this tumultuous decade was at its lowest ebb.

The current leader of the Ontario PC Party, John Tory, does not face that difficulty and has openly displayed his support for the new CPC and its leader Stephen Harper.<sup>17</sup> Coordinated electoral efforts occurred in 2004 and 2006, with Mr. Tory and many of his MPPs campaigning hard for Stephen Harper and the CPC ("PM might not want", 2004, May 24). "He was everywhere," said one advisor in the PMO (b). John Tory essentially conducted a mini-tour in Ontario during the 2006 federal campaign to help Stephen Harper and local CPC candidates. Mr. Tory canvassed ridings with federal candidates, attended numerous local announcements to help attract TV coverage of the event, and encouraged his party to come out and help elect Conservative candidates to office.

Again, the electoral collaboration works both ways. To both thank John Tory for his work in the election and, in part, to return the favour of endorsement, Stephen Harper attended a provincial Progressive Conservative convention to "rally the troops" shortly after becoming Prime Minister. Mr. Harper went so far as to introduce John Tory as "the next premier of Ontario" ("PM's comments", 2006, May 5) solidifying the close ties between the two parties.<sup>18</sup> When the Ontario election writ was dropped sixteen months

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing, Baird held the environment portfolio, Flaherty the finance portfolio, and Clement the portfolio for health.

<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that Bill Davis, a former PC premier of Ontario who is held in high regard among Conservatives in Ontario, has also come out in full support of the CPC. See: Ryan, Carolyn (2006).

<sup>18</sup> For those in the Ontario media, what made the Harper declaration worse was the fact that Harper had, for four months, refused to meet with Premier McGuinty (a Liberal). Before going to the provincial PC convention, the PM had hastily met with McGuinty in a hotel room for 45 minutes. He did not allot any time for press exposure or allow any pictures. See: "Harper's calculated snub" (2006, May 6).

later, high-profile Conservatives were dispatched to canvass with PC candidates (Galloway, 2007, September 28).

Aside from people, these party cousins are also inclined towards electoral cooperation in other ways. For instance, they share software for gathering data. The Constituent Information Management System (CIMS) stores identified voters, and the information from each provincial and federal election can, if desired, be pooled and scrutinized by strategists to pinpoint core areas of conservative support, or isolate “swing” ridings that could, potentially, turn an election into a triumph.<sup>19</sup> Gathering this vital information is usually contracted out to a telemarketing company. In the 2004 and 2006 general elections, the CPC used the Responsive Marketing Group, a Toronto-based firm “with a long history of doing work for the Ontario Progressive Conservatives” (Flanagan, 2007, 86). CIMS itself was based on the Trackright system initially developed by the Ontario PC Party.<sup>20</sup>

The parties have also collaborated on the Conservative Campaign University. The “university” is delivered through a video-conferencing system and, while initiated by the CPC in 2006, the content of the curriculum was developed and prepared by party professionals in the Ontario PC party. The campaign university runs every weekend on a sophisticated video-conferencing system that links Conservatives (both federal and provincial) together from across the country.<sup>21</sup> In short, the video conferencing system is able to engage provincial organizations and may prove to be a force in ensuring that the CPC rebuilds tighter links with its party cousins so they can be battle-ready together.

In addition to the campaign university, Ontario PC party members and their professional activists have participated in networking conferences with federal Conservatives and other provincial conservative parties across the country.<sup>22</sup> The most recent gathering was held in Ottawa in February 2008, hosted by the Manning Centre for Democracy.<sup>23</sup> The purpose of these conferences is to forge Conservative connections and

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<sup>19</sup> Voter identification can be conducted by the central campaign but more often it is carried out by the constituencies. If local ridings have the funds, they can contract with the party’s designated telemarketing company to identify votes. As a result, the decision to share this information with a federal or provincial riding counterpart is often taken at the local level.

<sup>20</sup> In the fall 2007 Ontario election, CPC headquarters in Ottawa provided trouble-shooting assistance for CIMS, the data management system now used by the provincial party. This greatly helped riding associations in the field when they had trouble accessing vital voter information. “I give them top marks for doing what they said they were going to do” said a provincial official.

<sup>21</sup> At the time of the interview the provinces linked in were BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick.

<sup>22</sup> Actually, the cross-country get-togethers began much earlier, in 1974, although they began as “morale boosting” events for the professional activists. As Laschinger and Stevens tell it: “The Big Blue Machine institutionalized its morale boosting in an annual gathering known as the Robertson’s Point Inter-Provincial Tennis Classic and Rough-In...It is like a fraternity weekend. Once each summer thirty or forty Tory men and (since 1987) women – key backroom players in election campaigns across the country – gather somewhere in Canada to play tennis and golf, swim, play cards, drink, and talk politics. It is the Conservatives’ way of networking and nurturing their organization” (1992, 121).

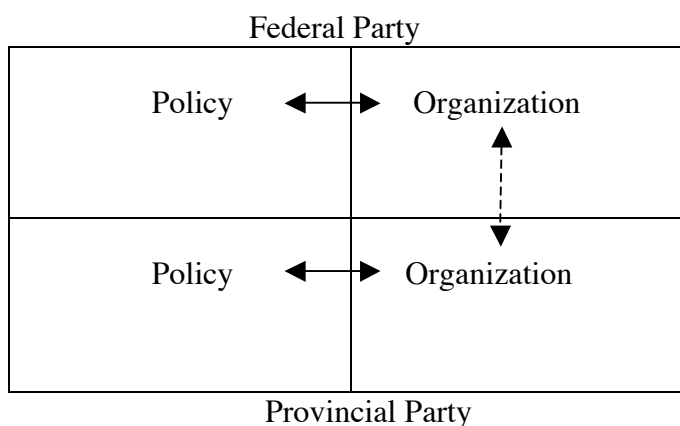
<sup>23</sup> Over a February weekend in 2008, Conservative activists gathered in different sessions to learn about winning close elections, effective door-knocking, blogging and social networking, campaign technologies and techniques, and fundraising. There were also panel discussions devoted to dealing with contentious ethical issues such as euthanasia. All current and past Conservative premiers were in attendance, as well as prominent federal ministers. Sharing these best practices aims to strengthen the right-wing vote across the



share best practices on campaign techniques in order to assist in the election of Conservative governments.

Another electoral link, structural in nature, is made through a “liaison” between the federal and provincial Conservative parties in Ontario. Dr. Kellie Leitch, the Ontario CPC Campaign Chair, was also the federal-provincial liaison between the two caucuses. Once a month, Dr. Leitch would visit the Ontario PC caucus to update them on what was going on federally in terms of campaign preparedness and how provincial members could be of assistance (e). Part of the help involved candidate recruitment. While a standing arrangement between the CPC and the Ontario PC prevents the poaching of candidates (also a form of cooperation), provincial MPPs and federal MPs can be asked to identify a potential candidate for the other level. Garfield Dunlop (MPP Simcoe North), for example, helped to recruit Bruce Stanton who is now an MP for that same riding.

In sum, despite the ten-year interlude when two right-of-centre parties at the federal level complicated electoral cooperation in Ontario, the creation of the CPC has eased tensions and inspired a tighter and more extensive collaboration between itself and the Ontario PC Party. The diagram below illustrates the type of electoral cooperation that has existed since 2004:



In this case, the policy groups are kept separate and this, again, reflects the importance of safeguarding provincial and federal interests that may often conflict. There is a dotted arrow between the two organization groups because very little of the collaboration is officially “formal”. There is, undoubtedly, a move in that direction, but to this point only the agreements of not poaching each other’s candidates and the sharing of CIMS software are more formal, collaborative efforts. The work of activists on the ground and the role of the provincial leader in federal campaigns is more in the “cooperative spirit” as opposed to being deliberately coordinated. In spite of the informality of cooperation, each party is finding the other extremely helpful at election time and this goodwill and collaboration may yet become increasingly formal, particularly as the CPC continues to establish itself as the sole party for Conservatives at the federal level.

### *The Ontario Liberal Party*

Much like the Conservative parties in Ontario, the core of electoral cooperation between the Ontario Liberal Party and the Liberal Party of Canada Ontario (LPCO) rests on Liberal activists. On the ground, “a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal” and most riding associations will encourage their members to campaign for the party engaged in battle, regardless of the level of the contest. The support on the ground is very important: both levels count on many of the same people to attend fundraisers, canvass door-to-door, pound in election signs, and work the phones to identify support.

Again like the Conservatives, the Liberal parties in Ontario strongly encourage paid staffers to contribute to the campaign and they routinely get involved in one another’s campaigns (Findlay, 2005, December 4). The activists who work for the Ontario Liberal leader, MPPs, or the party headquarters are directed to put in several hours of phone calling or door-knocking every week. This usually occurs after working hours or on the weekends. On a federal election day, everyone is on a full release to work on pulling the vote for the federal party.

Not all party staffers put in time only on their off-hours or weekends, however; some are seconded to work as full-time organizers. To this end, the provincial and federal Liberals engage in a significant exchange of personnel to help run their campaigns. While this has often occurred in the past the importance of engaging in this type of cooperation has been solidified since the 2003 provincial campaign.<sup>24</sup> After losing the 1995 and 1999 Ontario elections, the provincial Liberals leaned more heavily on their federal cousins both for strategy and expertise. Recalled one professional activist:

We relied on a lot of the [federal] teams to work with us. So, for example, many of our tour teams were federal Liberals. I mean, Liberals are Liberals are Liberals, but actually to get staff and get people to come down from Ottawa to Toronto was something we needed to do (f).

In addition to receiving a public endorsement from Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin (“PM might not want”, 2004, May 24), provincial Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty’s central campaign team was composed of people who had spent many years with the federal Liberal party and who were, at the time, working in the private sector. Warren Kinsella, a long-time aide to Jean Chrétien, was recruited to run the war room. Charlie Angelakos, formerly of the PMO’s Ontario desk, was asked to handle the provincial leader’s tour. Gordon Ashworth, a prominent federal and provincial party member, came on board to run the campaign with Don Guy, another activist who had once been a federally-oriented Liberal. All of these individuals were working in the private sector when they agreed to take part in the campaign; all were also federal Liberals in one capacity or another. With direction and advice from the federal Liberals, the provincial organization was able to mount a more effective campaign.

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<sup>24</sup> As one example, both Scott Reid and Karl Littler took a leave of absence from their jobs in the office of the Minister of Finance in Ottawa to work on the 1995 provincial campaign. In 1999, when federal and provincial riding boundaries first coincided, the provincial Liberals used federal riding phone lists and sign locations and a number of workers on the campaign were on loan from the staffs of federal MPs (see: Coutts, 1999, June 3).

After winning in 2003, provincial Liberals gave their full support to the LCPO during the spring 2004 federal election. This was partly fuelled by a desire to establish a permanent and formalized relationship of campaign cooperation. Said one organizer: “we felt that in 2004 we would help them and get them to help us even more in 2007 - just continuously, right?”. The federal party, plagued by an Auditor-General’s report detailing questionable spending by the government and Quebec wing of the party, was under fire and in need of assistance. One senior Liberal source admitted they were “*significantly* dependent on [the provincial party]”. The Ontario Liberals willingly loaned organizers to bolster their cousins’ sagging fortunes.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the other parties, this exchange of workers occurred on a more formal basis, with negotiations for the number of people and the roles they would play worked out in advance of the election between the central political organizers of the federal and provincial Liberal parties. According to one provincial organizer, between 25 and 35 paid organizers were committed to the federal Liberal party in Ontario from the outset of the campaign, with that number growing to a staggering 100 by the end of the election.

We went out and supported, at first, 25 ridings where we put out full-time people. We put out our outreach staff and field workers on the road for them and we adapted what we did in 2003 into their campaign. By the end of the campaign we had 98 people working full-time on the federal campaign and on Election Day there were hundreds because we just cleared out our offices. And (the federal Liberals) knew that and they were extremely happy (f).

Provincial Liberal staffers were coordinating volunteers, managing local campaigns, directing regional campaigns in the province, and working on the leader’s tour. According to one of the federal campaign chairs, there was a “high level of cooperation”, and the Liberal staffers on loan from the provincial party “made up something approaching half of our labour at the central and regional level” (g).<sup>26</sup>

A similar request was made to the provincial Liberals for the 2006 winter campaign and again, the Ontario Liberals responded positively. In the early part of the campaign 35 full-time people were placed on loan to the federal party in strategic ridings. Three weeks before Election Day, more people were sent out to help.<sup>27</sup> Near the end of

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<sup>25</sup> One provincial organizer admitted they also felt guilty. The provincial budget, announced only weeks before the federal writ was dropped, contained a “health premium” that made a number of Ontarians angry. The provincial Liberals wanted to help their federal cousins not only because they were all Liberals, but also to make up for the budget fallout that painted them all as “Fiberals”. With careful timing, the provincial Liberal party paid \$100,000 at the beginning of June to run radio ads outlining the benefits of the new health premium, emphasizing that the new funding would pay for “more cancer care, heart operations and hip and knee replacements” (Mackie, 2004, June 3). The federal election was held June 28, thereby giving the provincial Liberals a chance to polish the tarnished Liberal label for the benefit of their federal cousins.

<sup>26</sup> Those people who worked full-time as campaign managers for the federal party took leaves from their jobs and were paid by the local campaigns. The “value” of these particular workers must be declared according to Canadian election laws.

<sup>27</sup> Bucking recent trends of short campaign periods, the 2006 federal election lasted seven weeks. The writ was dropped on December 1, 2005 with Election Day scheduled for January 23, 2006 (See: *Canada Gazette: Proclamation Issuing Election Writs*. Retrieved January 6, 2008 from <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/partII/2005/20051201-x6/html/si131-e.html>).

the election period there were between 100 and 110 full-time people working on the campaign. And again, as in 2004, there was a full release of all remaining Queen's Park staff to work on Election Day to get out the vote for the federal Liberals. Additionally Premier Dalton McGuinty publicly endorsed Prime Minister Paul Martin and many Liberal MPPs canvassed heavily on behalf of the federal party (Howlett, 2005, November 30). In the end, the election was lost to the Conservatives who formed a minority government, but not for lack of cooperation on the Liberal side in Ontario.<sup>28</sup>

Other collaborative efforts focus on technology and infrastructure. Both parties employ the same company to identify Liberal voters during an election. "We work with the same supplier and pool their skills", said one federal operative, implying that the information from this method of contact is often shared. The parties have also jointly developed a programme to manage data derived from their own efforts at voter contact through campaign phone banks. The information is shared between the parties and illustrates a case where the two parties "actually directly looked at [their] needs and did something in the common interest to get elected" (g). The two parties also share IT experts during campaigns since "very few [people] actually know anything about IT in a campaign context" (g).

A remaining form of general collaboration between these parties is their infrastructure. The LPCO and the Ontario Liberal Party have been housed together for over fifteen years. The sharing of headquarter space is a formal cooperative arrangement though, with the exception of reception, the staff is distinct. However, during election campaigns, courtesies are extended. As a federal Liberal official explained:

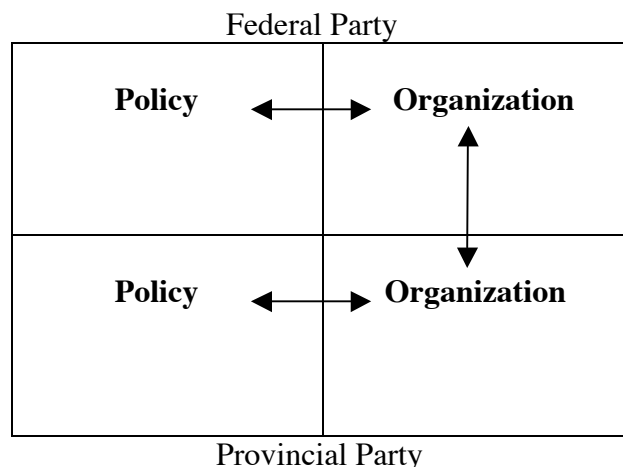
What typically happens during elections is that one party staff will vacate in favour of the other [party] because you need an expanded amount of space in an intense period. Some of the [provincial staff] will stick around and work on the federal side and others will vacate and open up their office to someone else who has been brought in for a particular purpose during the election period (g).

Moreover, all of the phones in party headquarters are made available to the party in need and Liberal staff who work at the Legislative Assembly will travel to the headquarters to help with the volunteer phone bank.

In brief, while the provincial and federal Liberal parties in Ontario are formally separate, they are more intertwined than many suspect. In the last four elections (two provincial and two federal) there has been a major collaborative effort between these party cousins during the campaigns. There is a more formal arrangement that involves a major infusion of political professionals and party staffers from one level to the other to help manage local campaigns, direct regional campaigns, work on the leader's tour in the province, run the war room, provide technological services, and develop software that will benefit both parties in an election. Graphically, electoral collaboration between the Liberal parties in Ontario can be represented as follows:

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<sup>28</sup> The CPC won 124 seats, the Liberal Party 103, Bloc Québécois 51, and NDP 29. There was also 1 independent. In Ontario, the Liberals won 54 seats and the CPC 40 (in 2004 the Liberals won 75 seats to the Tories' 24).



The electoral cooperation between Liberal parties in Ontario is a coordinated effort. The policy and organization camps have good communication with one another at their respective levels. There is also a clear channel of communication between the groups responsible for campaign organization at each level. This is how they are able to determine the level of “need” for a cousin’s campaign – 35 people are given on loan at the beginning of the campaign, for example, with a ramp-up to 100 by the last week or two. Other arrangements are worked out in terms of providing the technical expertise, the endorsement of the federal leader, and the relocation of party staff at the headquarters to provide enough room for the party-in-battle to wage a solid effort. This collaboration is a deliberate effort to put each other in the seat of power.

At the same time, the diagram reveals no connection between the policy groups. Both the Ontario PC party and the OLP jealously guard their prerogatives on policy. As illustrated by Liberals’ provincial health premium prior to the 2004 federal election and the fiscal gap campaign prior to the 2006 campaign, policy priorities can diverge from the interests of their federal cousins.<sup>29</sup> This has not, however, dampened electoral collaboration. Loyalty to the party label has ensured that campaign cooperation continues in spite of these disagreements.

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<sup>29</sup> The “Fairness” campaign was launched by the Ontario government in 2005. The basic thrust of the argument was that Ontario taxpayers put more money into federal government coffers than they received back in federal services. Federal Liberals were unhappy their provincial cousins were agitating about the issue so close to a possible election call. According to officials on both sides, the “fiscal gap” problem was resolved before the 2006 general election. See: McGuinty Renews Campaign to Narrow \$23 Billion Gap (2005, June 2). Retrieved March 2, 2008 from <http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/Product.asp?ProductID=99&Lang=EN>.

## Saskatchewan

### *The Conservative/Saskatchewan Party*

For the last ten years, the NDP and the Saskatchewan party have dominated the provincial party system.<sup>30</sup> The Sask party has consistently maintained its independence from any federal party, but informal ties to the CPC are increasingly evident. These links have led to some initial acts of electoral cooperation, primarily through shared activists.

On the ground, for example, there is a substantial crossover of people who will fight elections on behalf of the CPC and the Sask party, although none of this is coordinated formally. According to one CPC activist: “In Saskatchewan we had good, close connections between our local folks and the Sask Party. And our local folks, in most cases, were the same people” (b). Additionally, there are a number of people who have stood as candidates for both the CPC and the Sask party and some of the backroom advisors also overlap:

While the Saskatchewan Party is quick to note it has no formal relationship with any federal party, the personal connections are rather indisputable. (MPs Tom Lukiwski and Brad Farquhar were Saskatchewan Party general managers, Revenue Minister Carol Skelton was on the Saskatchewan Party executive and served on former party leader Elwin Hermanson’s constituency association and MP Lynn Yelich worked for MLA Allan Kerpan when he was an MP) (Mandryk, 2006, February 24).<sup>31</sup>

In a province like Saskatchewan where the population is small, this overlap can be significant. The former general managers of the Saskatchewan party alone would know a substantial number of activists to draw on for their own bids to elected office at the federal level.

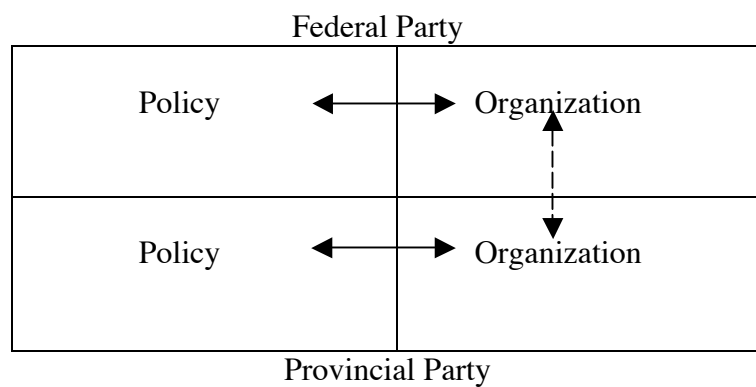
The CPC, furthermore, has made gestures to promote the relationship between the two parties and helped set up the 2007 electoral victory over the NDP by sending in star ministers and providing strategic campaign advice. At a Sask party pre-election weekend convention in Regina, Jim Prentice, a powerful minister in Stephen Harper’s cabinet, stopped by to give his approval to both party leader Brad Wall and the party as a whole (Wood, 2007, February 12). On campaign strategy, a political operative for the CPC has spoken with the Saskatchewan party caucus directly about how to fight elections. Saskatchewan is also linked to the CPC’s “Conservative Campaign University”. There has even been support on messaging. In 2006, then education critic Rod Gantefoer defended Stephen Harper’s decision to end the child care agreements forged by the federal Liberals with provincial governments (Mandryk, 2006, Feb 24). Combined, all of

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<sup>30</sup> The Sask party (as it is commonly called) was created in 1997 as an amalgam of Liberals and Progressive Conservatives. The Saskatchewan PC party went dormant to allow the Sask party a chance to grow (the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, however, did not). Many Saskatchewan PC party members simply became Sask party members. Likewise, the executive-director of the PC party became the general manager of the Sask party (Wishlow, 2001, 169-197).

<sup>31</sup> In addition, former communications strategist for Harper, Nancy Heppner, left her job in order to run in the 2007 provincial election for the Saskatchewan Party and MP Carol Skelton’s daughter Terri Harris was the executive assistant to Brad Wall when he was leader of the Official Opposition. See: Mandryk, Murray (2007, October 18). Speech interjects Ottawa into campaign. *Regina Leader-Post*. Retrieved November 7, 2007 from <http://www.canada.com/saskatoonstarphoenix/news/forum/story.html?id=799120f8-4329-42e8-be94-afe192a65130> and Martin, Paul. (2006, March-May). Women of influence: Saskatchewan’s most influential business women. *SaskBusiness Magazine*. 27(2), p 25.

these actions are efforts at electoral collaboration although none is formalized and the structures of the two parties are distinct. In the current context, collaboration between these two parties could be illustrated this way:



The directional arrows flow horizontally as expected. There is a fine dotted line between the vertical arrows on the organization side. This indicates that while overtures of cooperation between the Saskatchewan Party and the CPC are informal, they do exist. So far, the Sask party has been determined to maintain its independence from any federal party. Generally, provincial candidates have been careful about who works on their campaigns – the party does not want to be viewed as simply an offshoot of the CPC.<sup>32</sup> The expectation by both parties, however, is that the bonds between them will grow and this will result in greater electoral cooperation.

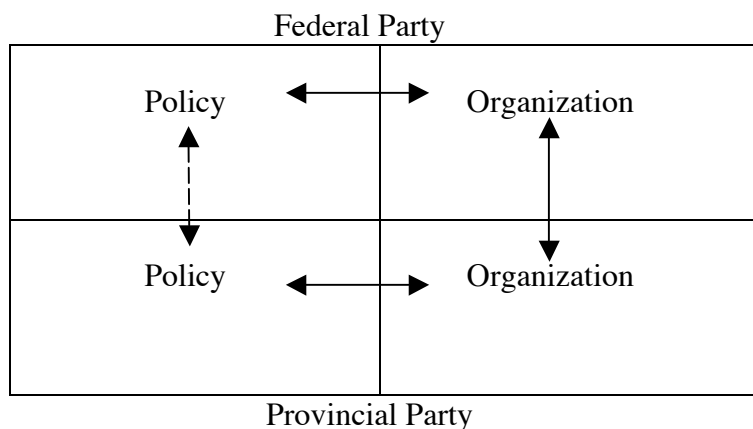
#### *The Saskatchewan Liberal Party*

The Liberal Party in Saskatchewan is a small, integrated association. It “operates as a relatively cohesive federal-provincial operation”, both organizationally and during election campaigns. The party has a convention once a year sponsored by the province but the federal players all attend and participate in the programme. Membership lists are shared, as are financial contributions. Similarly, the party headquarters, staff, and executive are in the position to be campaign-ready for either a provincial or federal election and they can count on the ground troops to come out for either occasion: “If we are to have any shot at winning it really does take all hands on deck,” noted a long-time Liberal activist in the province. “75 or 80 per cent [of Liberals] work on campaigns at both levels. I’m not aware of any obvious examples where people have stayed away from one campaign or the other” (h). While there certainly are members who would work solely on the provincial or federal side, the general commitment to both levels is replicated at the higher echelons in the party as well. Nikki Hipkin, for instance, is the federal campaign co-chair for Saskatchewan, but she has also served as a campaign

<sup>32</sup> Making this connection was a significant part of the NDP election strategy in the November 2007 provincial election. In a series of news releases entitled “The Truth about the Saskatchewan Party”, the NDP constantly linked the provincial organization with the CPC (see [http://ndpcaucus.sk.ca/saskparty/?The\\_Conservative\\_Connection](http://ndpcaucus.sk.ca/saskparty/?The_Conservative_Connection) and “Brad Wall can no longer hide ties to Federal Conservatives” at <http://www.saskndp.com/mod/releaseprint.php?id=70>).

manager for candidates at the provincial level (“Campaign co-chairs announce”, 2007, January 22).

Certainly since 1999, the provincial side of the organization has struggled to be a presence in Saskatchewan politics. The party has not held a seat in the legislature since 2003. Lately, the federal level has faced similar woes. Again, the same small army of Saskatchewan Liberal activists will participate in nominations and fight the election battles. Of the 14 federal seats allocated to the province, Ralph Goodale remains the only elected Liberal member and recent controversies over nomination contests has cost the party a seat in the northern part of the province<sup>33</sup> (Bernhardt, 2008, January 13). Cooperation in the Saskatchewan Liberal Association can be represented this way:



Here we see the ideal-type model. On the organizational axis, each group would ensure cooperation on the ground. In fact, many of the people who are members of the provincial organization group would also be members of the federal organization group. There is some overlap on the policy side, with consultation back and forth, but room is available to accommodate differences in provincial and federal interests. The provincial wing does bear the brunt of some unpopular federal positions; gun control is the most obvious example. And only recently have Saskatchewan party professionals been able to produce a “compendium” campaign platform directed to Saskatchewan voters.

In all, the Saskatchewan Liberal Association is a close party with tremendous overlap at the provincial and federal level. Party activists give little thought to the level at which an election is being fought; they simply turn up to do their part. The cooperation in this province may be due in part to their *lack* of success – with few conflicts to negotiate between them, it is easy to come together during elections. Even if there is little chance of winning seats, the same small group shows up each time to put up a fight. This loyalty, a characteristic of true partisanship, may indicate that campaign cooperation among Liberals in Saskatchewan will continue far into the future.

### **British Columbia**

#### The BC Liberal Party

<sup>33</sup> Liberal Gary Merasty won the riding of Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill in the 2006 federal election but resigned from politics in August 2007. The seat was subsequently won by the CPC in the March 17, 2008 by-election.



Because of British Columbia's particular party system and the unique composition of its current government, this province differs the most from the others regarding the ability of a provincial party to effectively, and overtly, "collaborate" with its federal affiliate in an election. In brief, the party system has been characterized as "free-enterprise versus socialism" (Blake, 1996, 72) and since the demise of the Social Credit Party in the early 1990s, parties of the right and centre-right (the Liberals and the Conservatives) have banded together to prevent the New Democratic Party from gaining power. Under the BC Liberal party label and its leader Gordon Campbell, the coalition won government in 2001 and was re-elected in 2005.

For practical politics, the merger of mixed partisans has meant a tenuous and delicate situation within the party and the government caucus. There are people within the party who consider themselves Liberals at both the federal and provincial levels. There are also people who are Conservatives at the federal level but, with no viable provincial conservative party, must join the BC Liberal Party to be involved at the provincial level.<sup>34</sup> As a result, keeping the coalition intact is Mr. Campbell's main priority. Consequently, electoral cooperation with party cousins at the federal level occurs infrequently, informally, and definitely covertly, because it can exacerbate existing tensions between provincial caucus members. On the surface, it would seem that the role of partisanship in BC has been neutralized and its effects nil – the focus is simply on the provincial party. Ironically, however, the reverse is true. The constant downplaying of partisanship within the BC Liberal party actually highlights its importance. If partisanship were truly inconsequential, electoral cooperation with one's federal party of choice would be of little concern and would occur openly. Instead, Mr. Campbell and his inner circle go to great lengths to cover the partisanship split in his party and this is what sets British Columbia apart from the other provinces in this study. Consider the following:

- The leader of the provincial party refuses to endorse leaders or candidates from any of the federal parties;
- Mr. Campbell himself eschews any connection with the Liberal Party of Canada (BC);
- The party professionals working for Mr. Campbell's play a very minor role in federal elections, if they play a role at all – separating key activists vertically is a way to minimize diverging partisanships at the provincial level;
- The two Liberal parties have little formal association in terms of their constitutions, youth wings, women's commissions, party headquarters, staff, or executives;
- Neither wing makes electoral accommodations in the interests of the other, the opposite of which has occurred in other provinces;
- Sharing resources during a campaign, even technical ones, is rarely even considered;
- Political staff and caucus members are banned from participating in federal politics – this prohibition was applied to the recent leadership races of the both the Liberals and the Conservatives and to the 2004 and 2006 general elections.

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<sup>34</sup> There is a registered BC Conservative party but it has a small membership and only ran seven candidates in the 2005 provincial election.

- The colours of the BC Liberal party were changed from red and white (the traditional colours identified with the Liberal Party and its provincial organizations) to red, white, and blue to differentiate itself from the federal Liberal party.

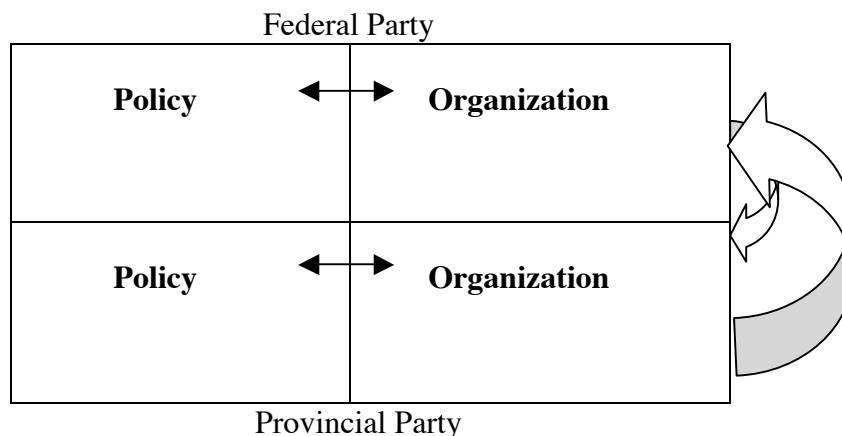
In spite of these efforts to downplay the role of partisanship in BC politics, the disparate loyalties of activists within the government coalition spill onto the federal scene. Covertly as it may be, electoral cooperation between provincial Liberals and their Liberal or Conservative counterparts still occurs. Party staffers and caucus members work on federal elections and leadership races though this is done discreetly. Party staffers will work on federal elections but they take low-profile jobs such as canvassing and stuffing envelopes. Staff who want to be involved more extensively in federal campaigns have travelled to other provinces in order to avoid repercussions in BC. Caucus members and former candidates will also help their affiliates at the other level but this, too, is done delicately. Election signs and wooden stakes are often shared, as are volunteer resources. According to one federal activist:

in the 2004 and 2006 [elections]...MLA X would call over and say ‘Hi, I’m going to be sending five volunteers who will campaign for you all weekend’ and the response is ‘thank you very much and we’ll reciprocate on the next go around’ (i).

These types of relationships exist throughout BC between provincial Liberals and their partisan cousin at the federal level, be they Conservatives or Liberals.

The paradox of partisanship in British Columbia politics thus becomes increasingly evident: while Premier Campbell himself may not be partisan and while he certainly goes to great lengths to reduce or cover up the partisan differences in his coalition, those MLAs and staff activists in the BC Liberal party are the opposite; many are both strongly attached and fiercely loyal to their federal counterparts. The ties of partisanship across the federal-provincial divide are thus highly important and pepper many aspects of provincial politics, even if formal arrangements for electoral collaboration cannot and do not occur.

The diagram below sets out the pattern of electoral collaboration in British Columbia between the BC Liberal Party and the two federal parties:



In this case, the policy and organizational groups work with one another within their respective levels. There is no formal cooperation between the levels within the structures of the parties. It may not be surprising that the policy groups would fail to reach out to one another, particularly when we consider the argument about provincial interests and the necessity of having “policy room”. On the organizational side, the collaboration occurs *outside* the party structure, as indicated by the arrows on the right side of the diagram. This is to represent the individual efforts that occur on a riding-by-riding basis between provincial activists and MLAs and their federal counterparts. The lack of any efforts to formally coordinate with the Liberal Party of Canada (BC) or the CPC is a result of the mixed partisan coalition at the provincial level. However, many ties *do* exist between BC Liberals and either the federal Liberals or the federal Conservatives. These connections result in electoral cooperation, however informal it may be, and this continually tests the coherence of the Campbell coalition at the provincial level.

### **Barriers to Collaboration**

The case studies here present an uneven picture of electoral cooperation between federal and provincial parties. In New Brunswick and Ontario, campaign collaboration between both Conservative and Liberal parties is close and efforts are made to coordinate electoral resources. In Saskatchewan, collaboration is close between the Liberal parties but much less so between the CPC and the Sask party although there is movement in that direction. Lastly, in British Columbia, party professionals in the central campaigns offer no electoral cooperation. Simply put, barriers to collaboration do exist and the subsequent degree of electoral cooperation can ebb and flow. Obstacles in the path of electoral cooperation can take a number of forms, including conflicts of personality between leaders, provincial interests, campaign fatigue, and party splits at either the provincial or federal level.

#### *Personality*

The largest hurdle to overcome seems to be conflicts of personality. If party leaders do not like one another, they can send a signal to their own party activists and members discouraging cooperation. A good example of personal rancour can be found in the relationship between Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Ontario Liberal Premier Mitch Hepburn during the 1930s (Whitaker, 1977, 309-328; Simpson, 1988, 341). Other examples of personality triggering internal party strife between the two levels can be found in British Columbia in the 1940s and 50s between George Drew and provincial leader Deane Finlayson (Black, 1965, 134) and in Saskatchewan between Prime Minister Lester Pearson and Liberal Premier Ross Thatcher (Smith, 1975).

#### *Provincial interests*

Provincial interests (or policy divergence) is a second barrier to harmonious party relations. Using the Pearson/Thatcher example again, the two men differed not only on the issue of personality, but also on the direction of federal policy. Prime Minister Pearson made a number of policy decisions to expand the welfare state in Canada, and Thatcher disapproved of the “lefty” policies of the Liberal leader because he foresaw it diminishing his chances to oust the socialists in power in Regina (Whitaker, 1977, 265).

More recently, in 2005 a dispute developed between Ontario Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty and the federal Liberal government over the province's so-called "fiscal gap". McGuinty claimed that Ontarians contributed \$23 billion more to the federal government than they received back in federal services. The provincial government embarked on a "Fairness Campaign" asking for a redress in the imbalance, beginning with a \$5 billion down payment ("Martin promises", 2005, May 8; Rodgers, 2005, May 8). Part of McGuinty's motivation was the deficit facing his government; help from federal coffers would go a long way towards balancing the provincial budget.

Many Ontario MPs were angry with their provincial cousins for pressing their interests publicly with a possible election in the offing.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, many were bitter that they had barely won their seats in the 2004 election, blaming the provincial government and its health premium for costing them "ten seats in Ontario" (Panetta, 2005, March 23).<sup>36</sup> The provincial government, however, refused to back down. According to the political professionals involved in the negotiations between the province and Ottawa, the dispute was resolved before the election and electoral cooperation remained the order of the day. An organizer with the provincial Liberal party doubted that election resources would have been withheld even if the fiscal gap issue had been ongoing, but he was adamant they would not have "wholesaled ourselves unless the issue had been given some consideration" (f). In short, shared partisanship can be an anchor that weathers policy differences but provincial interests will not be downplayed *because* of common partisanship. "It's a close relationship, like family", said one provincial Liberal, "but we're adults in that family and we have adult relationships. If my child needs something, I'm going to look after him first before I look after yours" (j).

Likewise, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper has clashed with Danny Williams, Progressive Conservative Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador over offshore revenue resources. Williams' stand against the Prime Minister has been grounded on the best interests of his province, although personality differences cannot be discounted. The policy disagreement has even touched on their common partisan bonds but with each leader taking a different approach. On the one hand, Premier Williams has threatened the federal Conservatives with a "goose egg" come election time if the issue of offshore resources remains unresolved (Leblanc, 2006, October 16). On the other hand, Harper has appealed to Atlantic Canadian Conservatives that their shared partisanship must be used as a bond:

It's always easy for Conservatives to get headlines by attacking other Conservatives. But when an election comes, those [opposition] opponents will not be working for us. They'll still be working for the other guys and make no mistake, our best, our only hope, is that despite our differences, the Conservatives stay united and work together in this province and across this country (Canadian Press, 2007, August 4).

Here, Mr. Harper is making the case that party loyalty is an anchor. At the end of the day, the true enemy are the other parties and electoral battles are waged against *them*, not each

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<sup>35</sup> Provincial activists working at Queen's Park insist they gave the government ample warning about going public with their campaign.

<sup>36</sup> Few may have realized how many more seats would have been lost without the organizational strength of the provincial Liberal machine behind them.

other. In other words, shared loyalty to a party should provide the net to both catch and hold partisans together when policy disagreements arise, no matter how deep the disagreement may be.

### *Campaign Fatigue*

A third barrier to cooperation is campaign fatigue. Particularly since 2004, where minority governments have prevailed in Ottawa, being ready for an election at any moment can be vexing. Timing an election, whether by the government itself or the opposition parties, is also cause for concern when the readiness of provincial counterparts must be taken into consideration. Ontario, for instance, is a key battleground for both the Conservatives and Liberals. There was chatter in the fall of 2007 that the federal government would fall on its Throne Speech. For a few political organizers on the Conservative side, there was concern about rallying the troops in Ontario since they had just lost an election to the provincial Liberals. Morale was low and campaign fatigue had set in. While this would not be a reason to *reject* dropping the writ, cajoling tired activists at the provincial level into another round of campaigning could be more problematic. Or, the cooperation that did occur would not enjoy the same level of enthusiasm. (And remember, the activists that fight the ground war are often the same people at both levels.) Asking them to fight another battle so soon after a provincial election can be risky.

### *Party Splits*

As was evident with the creation of the Reform Party, “splits” in parties can be a major barrier to collaboration. Dealt a substantial blow in the 1993 federal election, the Progressive Conservative party held on and gained more seats in subsequent elections. Having two conservative parties at the federal level, however, created headaches for PC parties in the provinces. Many provincial PC members left the federal party to join Reform and, after that, the Canadian Alliance. Others held on to their loyalties to the federal PCs. For the political organizers at the provincial level, particularly in Ontario, cooperation during federal elections became an arduous task. Most did not want to risk alienating their own members by providing campaign assistance to one conservative party over the other.<sup>37</sup> Instead, cooperation ceased save for volunteers and activists at the riding levels who, as always, were free to choose which party they wished to support. In the ten years between 1993 (when Reform performed quite strongly in the campaign to the detriment of the Progressive Conservatives) and 2003 (when the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative Party formally merged into the Conservative Party of Canada), campaign collaboration across the levels was at its lowest ebb.

Since the merger, however, campaign cooperation with provincial parties has improved dramatically. We see this especially in Ontario, but more work is also being done in Saskatchewan and other provinces to, as one official put it, “formally or more formally cooperate” (d). There is little risk of alienating one’s own party members when the federal party is strongly united. Political organizers across the levels are speaking directly with one another, coordinating support both on the ground and in the air. Most

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<sup>37</sup> This was not the case in New Brunswick where the two PC parties remained tight throughout the tumultuous decade.

of the Conservative operatives interviewed had optimistic expectations about nurturing close electoral relationships. This is buoyed by each election where a party at one level follows through with promised assistance; trust is rebuilt and relationships grow stronger, creating a virtuous cycle for fighting elections.

### **Conclusion**

It is evident from this examination of electoral collaboration between party cousins that cooperation occurs in a variety of forms and to varying degrees. Where cooperation is close, such as in New Brunswick and Ontario for example, it forges unity between parties and becomes an integrating link. Even where cooperation is not as extensive, there is a clear intention by political professionals to strengthen party ties across the levels (in Saskatchewan between the CPC and the Sask party, for instance) or, at the very least, to help out individual partisans during a campaign even if this is done as discreetly as possible (BC). Indeed, scholars should not be satisfied with minimizing the role party professionals play in bringing parties together. From these case studies, it is clear that activists at the elite level are strongly committed to their party and willingly share resources in the electoral advantage of their partisan counterpart. They want each other to *win*. This has the effect of shrinking the space between partisan affiliates and challenges the notion that Canada's federal system has led to increasingly disentangled political parties.

When this type of cooperation in a province is close, more questions can be raised. For example, if elections can bond party organizations and their activists, what effect does this have if the parties should each become the government at their respective level? Does shared partisanship, which integrates party cousins on the electoral battlefield, carry over on a government-to-government basis? These queries deserve serious consideration. If party cousins lean on each other's campaign "machines" to get elected, and if this has the effect of forging unity between them, the role of partisanship can not be discounted as a factor that could affect the conduct of intergovernmental relations. New research can examine the roles that party activists take on *within* government at each level and whether or not their pre-existing relationships can be used to better manage issues *between* governments.<sup>38</sup> The partisan dimension of federal-provincial relations has long been a neglected aspect of federalism studies (Young and Leuprecht, 2006, 17). This paper has demonstrated that perhaps there is good reason to return to just such an investigation.

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<sup>38</sup> Academics and political observers have acknowledged that a modern use of patronage is to bring the political professionals into positions of power when a party wins government (Noel, 2007, 206; Kinsella, 2007, 25). Furthermore, people in these positions have a growing influence over the development and direction of public policy (Savoie, 1999, 98-104).

**APPENDIX – Schedule of Interviews**

- (a) *Personal interview with provincial and federal Conservative activist. Wednesday January 31, 2007, in Ottawa, Ontario.*
- (b) *Personal interview with Conservative official in the PMO. Wednesday January 31, 2007, in Ottawa, Ontario.*
- (c) *Personal interview with Liberal activist in New Brunswick. Wednesday August 15, 2007 in Fredericton, NB.*
- (d) *Personal interview with senior CPC official. Tuesday January 30, 2007 in Ottawa, Ontario.*
- (e) *Personal interview with Dr. Kellie Leitch. Monday February 5, 2007 in London, Ontario.*
- (f) *Personal interview with provincial Liberal activist. Saturday June 24, 2006 in London, Ontario.*
- (g) *Personal interview with federal Liberal activist. Wednesday January 24, 2007 in Toronto, Ontario.*
- (h) *Interview by phone with provincial and federal Liberal activist in Saskatchewan. Monday January 14, 2008.*
- (i) *Personal interview with federal and provincial Liberal activist. Tuesday November 21, 2006 in Vancouver, BC.*
- (j) *Personal interview with provincial Liberal official in Premier's Office. Tuesday January 8, 2008 in Toronto, Ontario.*

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