

**Party Member and Public Participation in Party Policy Processes**

**I. Introduction**

Political parties are considered a cornerstone in the practice of democracy in Canada. This perception undoubtedly arises from the fact that parties have undertaken a number of roles that are fundamental to the manner in which Canadians experience and participate in government in this country. The various functions that these organizations carry out form the basis of several of the important requirements of the practice of democracy in Canada, including local and national candidate recruitment and nomination, leadership selection, the conducting of election campaigns, issue agenda setting and government policy-making. (Cross, 2004) Historically, parties were also responsible for political socialization and social organization, although these roles have become less prominent in more recent times. (Ware, 1996; Carty, Cross and Young, 2000) In relation to these various responsibilities, parties served as the theoretical link between citizen participation and government, particularly in relation to the development of public policy. Parties existed not only as organizations that contested elections, but also served as sites of interest aggregation and articulation and provided citizens with the opportunity to advance their policy demands through these organizations.

Despite their apparent preeminence to the practice of politics in Canada, there have been increased suggestions that parties have been usurped as the preferred choice of democratic participation by other organizations such as interest groups and social movements. (Thorburn, 2007) Coinciding with this development is the perception that parties have become increasingly elitist and alienated from ordinary Canadians, particularly in relation to citizen involvement in the policy development process. (Clarke et al, 1996; Cross, 2004) The shift from the mass-membership based organizations of the 1950s and 60s to the current elite driven and more professional associations has also resulted in changes to the level of public and party member involvement in election platform drafting process, becoming negligible for party members and non-existent for most members of the public. (Carty, 2006, Cross and Young, 2006) In short, these developments suggest that ordinary citizen participation in the policy-making process by way of involvement with political parties in Canada has become nothing more than a spectator sport. The only citizens with any influence are those few elite persons with ties to the party hierarchy and/or the party leader.

These suggestions raise problematic questions concerning the ongoing functioning of democracy in Canada and specifically in relation to parties themselves. One of the primary motivations for individuals to join political parties is their belief in the policy positions of any one particular party. (Cross and Young, 2006) However, if party members have no impact on party policy formation, why do people continue to join parties? Furthermore, why do ordinary Canadians and party members try to influence party policy through participation in the variety of participatory forms available to them, be it through local party policy meetings, regional or provincial seminar series and/or full-blown national policy conventions? For that matter, why do parties even maintain any type of broader policy consideration infrastructure for party members at all if there is not going to be any significance attached to the wishes of party members? A cynical response to the first two questions is based on naiveté and idealism on the part of ordinary citizens who blindly participate without any understanding that their activities

have little or no impact on eventual party policy proposals or eventual government policy outputs. Cross and Young (2006) however demonstrate the opposite; that party members are acutely aware of their potential lack of influence in party policy-making. The third question becomes even more difficult in the sense that parties devote considerable time and personnel and financial resources to these policy-making endeavours for them to be simple facades of legitimation. To the contrary, parties with scarce resources and declining party memberships continue to conduct these exercises and engage the public and their memberships in an open discussion of policy issues.

This seeming dichotomy between the apparent lack of influence of the public and party members and their continued involvement in party policy-making processes may stem more from the fact that this involvement has tended to only be viewed at the final stage of the completion of a party's election platform. This observation fails to consider that party policy development is a multi-tiered process and that involvement by party members can occur at multiple levels and with varying degrees of intensity. This paper argues that public and party member participation and input into the determination of the content of election policy commitments has to be viewed from a wider perspective and from at least two different dimensions. First, involvement in party policy-making is not just concerned with the actual policy commitments advanced during the course of election campaigns, although this remains a significant stage in the process. Rather consideration must also be paid to the influence of party members on the entire policy philosophy and direction of a party. It is not only specific policy proposals advanced during the course of an election campaign that make up the policy milieu of an organization, but rather it consists of the ideology and values of the party as well. In this regard, this paper establishes a vertical hierarchy of party member influence in the policy activities of their respective organizations, with election platform drafting being only one stage, and the final stage, in the overall policy development process of a party. Second, party member and public participation is not only differentiated on the basis of what level their influence is directed at, but is also dependent on the degree to which they are permitted to be involved at each individual stage in the process. In other words, not only does location of involvement have an impact on party member participation in the process, but also the extent to which party members are empowered to participate at each stage in the process. In this regard, this paper will also develop a horizontal typology of party member involvement at the level of election platform development and will argue that this aspect of party member participation has tended to change in both form and intensity from one party to the next, from one election to the next and is heavily dependent on party leadership and electoral context.

In arguing for a broader consideration of the impact of party members on the development of policy within political parties, this paper is divided into three sections. The first section sets out the vertical and horizontal models of party member involvement. The second section undertakes an empirical assessment of the participation in the policy development process by party members in Canada's two major parties over the period of 1984 to 2006. In particular, it focuses on the final stage of the vertical model, namely the development of election campaign programs by the major parties in Canada. However, despite the focus on only the final policy development stage, the empirical analysis will also demonstrate the impact that party member involvement has at other levels in the policy development process. To complete this analysis, this section of

the paper is based on interviews of party officials concerned with the drafting of the party platforms from each of the major parties in Canada from 1984 to 2006. Party officials were asked to detail the policy drafting process employed by their respective parties in preparation for upcoming elections. The third and final section of the paper will discuss the findings of the empirical work in relation to the proposed models and suggest avenues for future research on the participation of party members on the policy development process.

## **II. Models of Party Member Participation in Party Policy-making Process**

### ***(a) Vertical Model***

The influence of party members and the public on the policy-making process of parties can be divided into at least four different levels or sites of impact: ideology, values, policy themes and specific policies. The level of influence that party members have will differ from one level to the next and will be dependent on both in-party factors, such as leadership, as well as external factors including the institutional arrangements of a given polity, broader societal makeup and interests as well as the broader political environment and context.

At the broadest and most general level, every party is based on a foundational ideology. They represent a conscious and deliberate attempt by party founders to achieve a “definitional monopoly of the political world” and convince others of the way things are, the way they ought to be and the way it is possible for them to be. (Nesbitt-Larking, 2002). The main conception of ideology is usually rooted in the consideration of economic policy, pitting “right-of-centre” or liberal and conservative parties versus “left-of-centre” or social democratic parties against one another. The Liberal Party of Canada and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada are associated with the former whereas the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and the New Democratic Party are examples of the latter. However, the foundational ideology of parties in Canada has often also encompassed other aspects of ideology, including differing conceptions of nationalism, populism, social conservatism and environmentalism. For example, the Bloc Quebecois is founded on the nationalist aspirations of the sovereigntist movement in Quebec while the National Party of Canada was based on the view that the government needed to establish a more independent and isolationist country. The Reform Party of Canada was primarily based on the populist tradition of its forerunner, the Social Credit Party of Canada. Strains of social conservatism have been incorporated into both the Canadian Alliance and the Conservative Party of Canada, along with elements of populism and economic conservatism. More recently, the Green Party of Canada has veered across the economic ideological spectrum under different party leaders, yet has maintained a consistent ideological foundation in relation to its view of the need to protect the environment.

At the second level, party policy-making is also influenced by the values and beliefs of party members that are informed by a party’s foundational ideology. At this level, party members influence the overall direction of policy choices without dictating the specific policy areas through which the values and ideology are to be put into place. For example, a party based on a right-of-centre economic ideological foundation, will be committed to values such as reducing the size of government and individual freedom as opposed to an active role of government and the primacy of equality that would be associated with a left-of-centre party.

The third level consists of specific policy themes, that is, the policy issues that party members consider as the most important issues to be dealt with by government and is obviously informed by both ideological and value based considerations. Policy themes are the dominant policy area considerations in which a party attempts to fulfill its values and ideology. In this regard, the implementation of a right-of-centre economic ideology committed to the value of reducing the size of government and maximizing individual freedom will seek to achieve these goals through the policy theme of reductions in levels of taxation as well as reductions in levels of government spending. The consideration of policy themes has been reflected in the academic literature focused on spatial modeling of parties as well as saliency theories of parties.

The fourth and final level at which party members may influence the policy development process of their parties is the creation of specific policy positions. This aspect of policy-making is usually associated with the creation of election platforms and overall party policy. It usually takes place in the context of national or regional policy conventions or other party infrastructures where the outcome of the process is the commitment to a particular and specific policy. In this regard, it should also be noted that there may be differences between general party policy, as contained in party policy manuals or books, and specific election campaign policy platforms that are generally reserved for use during the course of election campaigns. It is this point in the party policy-making process that most of the literature considers as the avenue of influence that party members possess or more likely, fail to possess. In particular, the lack of influence is concerned not only with the creation of party policy, but the implementation of it as well when the party is in government.

***(b) Horizontal Model***

Party member influence in party policy-making process depends not only on the location of involvement, but also the depth of participation at each stage in the process as well. In this regard, it is likely possible to create a model of party member participation at each stage in the process. At the final stage of the process, the drafting of election campaign platforms, there are at least four levels of participation that the broader party membership may play and which correspond with the type of process employed by a party: drafting, approval, consultation and elite.

Party member influence and participation is at its highest in relation to the use of policy-making processes that are based on the drafting role. In this regard, election platform drafting is completed by broader party membership either through adoption of binding policies at policy convention or drafting by party membership elected policy committee.

At the second level, the approval level, the election platform drafting process is shifted away from the broader party membership and is completed by parliamentary caucus or leader's office. However, the broader party membership is involved through the requirement of the need for it to formally approve the platform, either through policy convention, party committee or elected party hierarchy.

The third level of influence in the election platform drafting process is consultative. At this level of influence, the platform drafting is completed by parliamentary caucus or leader's office and involves a high level of consultation with the broader party membership. However, there is no formal or effective approval of party



After they had individually finalized their recommendations, the various policy proposals were provided to caucus members for review prior to a caucus retreat at Mont Ste. Marie, Quebec. The retreat, held in the fall of 1983, included all of the elected caucus as well as several important members of the party, consisting mostly of the party's main election campaign organizers. Over the course of the weekend conference, the various policy recommendations were debated and refined and the key elements of the election policy platform were established. There were no limitations on the policy proposals or recommendations that the critics could have brought forward to the caucus retreat.<sup>3</sup> There was, however, an unarticulated sense among the caucus retreat participants of what types of policies were acceptable for the party from an ideological perspective.<sup>4</sup> The only other limitation that was perceived to influence the completion of the election platform was the need to demonstrate to the public that the party had a plan in place to address the problems facing the Liberal government. Given the complete lack of input by the broader party membership, it was clear that this was an "elite" form of policy development.

***ii. The 1988 Election***

The policy drafting process for the Progressive Conservatives in the 1988 election resembled the process that took place in advance of the 1984 campaign. In particular, Mulroney again gave the Cabinet responsibility for developing policy recommendations for inclusion in the election platform or for emphasis during the election campaign.<sup>5</sup> While the process was similar in design to that of 1984, there were three key differences. First, prior to the 1988 campaign, there was no retreat or convention at which the potential policy issues were discussed with the caucus, thereby further limiting the level of party involvement in the policy development process. Second, the overt consultations that took place in 1984 with members of the business community and various industry groups were also greatly reduced, primarily because the Cabinet was already privy to this advice through governing. Third, the bureaucracy played a much greater role in terms of providing information and advice to Cabinet Ministers on the various policy options available to address particular policy problems.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of a policy conference or retreat to consolidate the policy proposals into an election platform, the task of undertaking this project fell to the Deputy Prime Minister, Don Mazankowski.<sup>7</sup> The platform reinforced and built on the "small-c" conservative values that had been introduced in 1984, including continued emphases on more efficient government, a reduced role of the state and the preeminence of the market.<sup>8</sup> The lack of continued involvement by the party membership means that this remained an "elite" process.

***iii. The 1993 Election***

With the resignation of Mulroney from the leadership of the party, the new Prime Minister, Kim Campbell, and her party faced a dilemma in terms of policy development as they approached the 1993 election campaign. If the party opted to develop a new set

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government to provide talks on specific finance issues over dinner and interested members of the caucus were free to attend. (Interview with Geoff Norquay).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

of policies, it would be seen as a repudiation of the previous nine years of government, of which Campbell had been a high profile member, as well as raising concern over the potential international financial implications of rejecting the existing fiscal and monetary policies.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, if it pursued a status quo and extension of the existing policy direction, Campbell risked being associated with the unpopular Mulroney. In the absence of a clear direction from Campbell, the status quo was maintained and little policy development occurred either from the Prime Minister's Office or from individual Cabinet Ministers.<sup>10</sup> A committee of senior Cabinet Ministers was created to develop new policy ideas and write speeches for Campbell, but it "never coalesced and focused its approach".<sup>11</sup> As a result, the lack of policy development meant that the briefing documents put together by Mulroney and the senior civil service in preparation for the transition to Campbell and her new Cabinet served as the party's election platform.<sup>12</sup> Minor changes were made to the platform to reflect the new leadership and emphasize particular issues, but overall there were few new policies offered to the electorate.<sup>13</sup> Broader party input into the policy development bordered on being non-existent and consultations with business and industry groups had already taken place in the context of the normal interactions between these groups and the government.<sup>14</sup> Overall, despite the change in leadership, the policy development process remained "elite".

## ***B. The Liberal Party of Canada***

### ***i. The 1984 Election***

In contrast to the well-organized Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives, the Liberals and their leader, John Turner, were not well prepared to contest the 1984 election from a policy perspective. Upon assuming the leadership of the party and the Office of Prime Minister shortly before the election, Turner found the internal organization of the party lacking, including the absence of a policy development process.<sup>15</sup> In spite of this, Turner called the election on the basis that he, as an un-elected Prime Minister, required a mandate from the electorate in order to govern.<sup>16</sup> Coinciding with the election call, Turner created an elaborate and bureaucratic system of seven policy committees, each consisting of various Cabinet Ministers. The policy committees were charged with the responsibility of drafting election policy proposals to be forwarded to Turner for modification or acceptance and vetting by senior advisors.<sup>17</sup> The various policy committees developed planks throughout the course of the campaign. As each policy was finalized, it was provided to Turner for his approval, given to the election campaign committee to turn into a speech and incorporation into campaign material and then announced on the campaign trail by Turner.<sup>18</sup> Given the bureaucratic structure of

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<sup>9</sup> Woolstencroft, Peter. "Doing Politics Differently: The Conservative Party and the Campaign of 1993" in Frizzell, Alan, Pammett, Jon H. and Westell, Anthony. The Canadian General Election of 1993. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994, at page 34.

<sup>10</sup> Woolstencroft at pages 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> Woolstencroft at page 14.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

<sup>13</sup> Woolstencroft at page 15.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Harry Near.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with John Turner.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with John Turner.

<sup>17</sup> Weston, Greg. Reign of Error: The Inside Story of John Turner's Troubled Leadership. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1988, at page 87.

<sup>18</sup> Weston, at pages 87 and 92.

the committee system and the lengthy approval process it employed, the campaign team was not able to produce any policies or campaign material for the first month of the campaign.<sup>19</sup> Even then, the process was still only able to produce material only in time for Turner to announce it the following day.<sup>20</sup>

The initial focus of the campaign was to demonstrate that Turner was an agent of change and that his government would be different from the Trudeau regime.<sup>21</sup> In this context, while there were no explicit restrictions on the types of policies or policy areas that could be pursued and all options were open to the Turner government to propose, there was also a sense that the party had to repair its image with the business community following the final budgets and policies of the Trudeau government.<sup>22</sup> It was Turner's belief that the ability of the government to support and sustain a strong social policy system necessitated a strong economy and a sound and robust business community and, as such, he was intent on repositioning the party to reflect this view.<sup>23</sup> The lack of party member involvement in the development of the campaign promises means that Turner employed an "elite" process for this election.

#### *ii. The 1988 Election*

As a result of the difficulties experienced by the party in the 1984 campaign with respect to its lack of policy preparedness, the party undertook a concerted effort to develop a comprehensive policy platform in advance of the 1988 campaign.<sup>24</sup> This policy development process commenced in the summer of 1987 when Turner created a party-based policy committee, consisting of approximately eighty members, to develop an election platform to be used in the forthcoming election. This policy committee was viewed as being highly representative of the broader population and it was believed that it would thereby accurately reflect the sentiment of the electorate.<sup>25</sup> The policy committee itself was led by a steering committee of six members who met with Turner and the caucus, were "brought up to speed" on the relevant issues facing the Progressive Conservative government and then set about relating the broad goals and values of the party in relation to these specific policy issues.<sup>26</sup> Given the limited capacity of the steering committee, it focused on the broader campaign themes and goals and relied heavily on the party's research bureau to conduct research and develop specific policies.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, the steering committee and the research bureau relied on at

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<sup>19</sup> Simpson, at page 23.

<sup>20</sup> Weston, at pages 92-93.

<sup>21</sup> Simpson, Jeffrey. "The Vincible Liberals" in Frizzell and Westell, at page 23. This attempt by Turner to fashion himself as an agent of change from Trudeau was undercut at the outset of the campaign by Turner's inclusion of many of Trudeau-era Cabinet Ministers in his own Cabinet. Subsequent events during the campaign further cemented the perception that Turner was not offering much different from Trudeau, including the Trudeau patronage appointments, a recycling of many Trudeau-like policies (as generated by the policy committees) and reliance on Trudeau-era advisors. Simpson, at pages 23-25.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with John Turner.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with John Turner.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with John Turner. See also Clarkson, Stephen. "The Liberals: Disoriented in Defeat" in Frizzell, Pammett and Westell at pages 32-33.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Patrick Johnston.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Patrick Johnston.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Patrick Johnston. The steering committee was limited in terms of the time available to develop the election platform, a lack of funding and the volunteer nature of four of the six members who continued to carry on their occupations outside of the process. See also Clarkson at page 32.

least three different party policy processes to gather research data and information - the 1986 party convention that both confirmed Turner's continuing leadership of the party as well as the passage of a number of policy resolutions, a series of open-to-the-public policy meetings and workshops conducted by riding associations across the country and three regional policy conferences held by the party in late 1987 and early 1988 that were open to all members of the party..<sup>28</sup>

After the steering committee developed and refined the broad goals and direction of the election platform, they met with Turner in February 1988 to discuss the policy approach being pursued.<sup>29</sup> The entire eighty-member policy committee subsequently met in the spring of 1988 to debate proposals generated by the research bureau in relation to the goals and themes developed by the steering committee. Specific proposals were discussed, debated and eventually agreed upon by the entire committee in order to arrive at an election platform that consisted of forty issue commitments. Extensive background papers were also attached to the policies, the purpose of which was to set out the anticipated costs of the specific commitment and outline the policy positions taken by other parties.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the fact that the research bureau and the steering committee commenced their considerations with the three sources of party information, the resolutions arising therefrom were considered to be persuasive only.<sup>31</sup> The overall manifesto development process was approached from a practical perspective and there were no explicit limitations imposed on the two committees as to the types or areas of policy that could be pursued.<sup>32</sup> Other perceived limitations on policy development existed within the party itself or had to do with the tensions inherent between the competing factions within the party.<sup>33</sup> Given the broader participatory policy infrastructure employed by Turner, the election policy process shifted to being one that was "consultative".

### *iii. The 1993 Election*

Unlike Campbell and the Progressive Conservatives, Chretien and the Liberals had ample time to develop a comprehensive election policy platform and involve party members in this process. Following his success in gaining the leadership of the party, Chretien set about repositioning the party to address some of the problems facing himself and the party, including perceptions that Liberals were fiscally irresponsible and anti-business and that Chretien was "yesterday's man".<sup>34</sup> Part of this exercise involved establishing, or re-establishing, a wide-ranging party policy development process to counter the prevailing opinions of Chretien and the Liberals. The first stage undertaken in this process was a policy conference along the same lines as prior party conferences

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Patrick Johnston.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with John Turner and interview with Patrick Johnston.

<sup>30</sup> Clarkson at page 32.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Patrick Johnston.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with John Turner and interview with Patrick Johnston.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with John Turner. In particular, the need to deal with issues of federalism and the place of Quebec in the federation had the potential to divide the party into competing factions. In this regard, Turner saw the difference between those who advocated for a flexible approach with respect to Quebec's demands for more autonomy within the country (his position) and those that were more in favour of a more centralized vision of federalism (Trudeau and Chretien). Attempts to bridge these gaps meant that no specific position from either camp was available.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek and interview with Peter Donolo.

convened by Mackenzie King in the 1930s and Lester Pearson in the 1960s. The policy conference took place in Aylmer, Quebec in November 1991 and participating persons, all of whom were invited by Chretien, included both Canadian and international policy experts (non-party members) as well as members of the party.<sup>35</sup> The conference generated a lot of emphasis for particular policy issues, such as the need to establish a credible fiscal policy, but the most significant development was that it convinced the party that it needed to modernize and accept the influences of globalization and its impact on public policy in Canada.<sup>36</sup>

The second stage of the policy development process took place at the party's national policy convention in February 1992. As with previous national policy conventions, policy resolutions raised by members of the party were brought forward, debated and either accepted or rejected by the convention delegates. The gathering also served to provide party members with the opportunity and ability to comment on the general direction and values being pursued by the leadership.<sup>37</sup> While Chretien exercised his right as leader to bring five resolutions arising out of the Aylmer Conference to a vote on the floor,<sup>38</sup> the convention still managed to rebut the perception that party members did not have input into the party's policy-making process.<sup>39</sup>

The third stage of the process occurred in conjunction with the national policy convention and involved the appointment by Chretien of Dr. Chaviva Hosek, the chair of the party's policy committee, and Paul Martin, Chretien's leadership rival, as co-chairs responsible for the drafting of the election platform. Hosek and Martin undertook an extensive consultation process across the country with party members, policy experts, interest groups and interested individuals.<sup>40</sup> As with the input received from delegates at the national convention, this consultation process was also focused on the themes and direction that the party should pursue in its election platform and not on specific policy prescriptions.<sup>41</sup> Coinciding with these discussions with the broader party membership, the elected caucus members were also brought into the debate concerning the direction of the election platform.<sup>42</sup> At the same time as these two broad consultations were being undertaken on the overall direction of the election platform, the party's research bureau, under the guidance of Hosek, set about researching and developing specific policy proposals.<sup>43</sup> Once all of the consultations and specific policy work had been completed,

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<sup>35</sup> A collection of the papers delivered at the conference by the various experts was published with Chretien as the editor. See Chretien, Jean, ed. Finding Common Ground: The Proceedings of the Aylmer Conference. Hull, Que: Voyageur Publishing, 1992.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with Chaviva Hosek, Peter Donolo and Edward Goldenberg.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Peter Donolo.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Edward Goldenberg. The convention delegates approved all five resolutions that Chretien brought forward.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Peter Donolo.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek. Hosek described the consultation process as extensive, organized, determined, iterative and deep and that it was more about listening to people and getting a sense of the pulse of the party members. The process included traveling across the country and attending as many annual meetings of riding associations and provincial associations as possible. Once the process had been completed and the direction of the platform had been established, they returned to the provincial associations for further feedback. Interview with Chaviva Hosek.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Peter Donolo.

Martin and Hosek and their assistants set about writing the election policy platform document that became known as the “Red Book”.<sup>44</sup> In terms of constraints on its platform development process, the Liberals also faced a dilemma in that the process involved negotiations and balance between the factions within the party in order to accommodate various interests as well as convince skeptical party members that the world had changed and that the party had to modernize its thinking.<sup>45</sup> While the actual drafting of the election policy platform itself was completed on an elite basis, the broadly consultative approach used to inform the drafters of the platform of the party member views would mean that the approach was “consultative”.

*iv. The 1997 Election*

The Liberals pursued a similar policy development process in preparation for the 1997 campaign as they did in 1993, at least in relation to the second and third stages of the process. While the party did not replicate the first stage of the process by holding an Alymer-like policy conference, it did hold national policy conventions in both 1994 and 1996. In preparation for these meetings, the Prime Minister’s Office worked with individuals and groups within the party to produce policy options for consideration.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the policy conventions, Dr. Hosek and another individual were given the responsibility of undertaking the third stage of the development process by consulting party members, the Cabinet and caucus members in relation to the development of the election platform.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, consultations with interest groups and interested persons outside of the party took place in the context of relationships that were generated through governing and the policy proposals advanced by these groups may have been included in the party’s election platform if they were an appropriate solution to a problem facing the government.<sup>48</sup> However, the consultation process with the broader party membership was cut short by the election call. As such, and in comparison to what transpired in 1993, the third stage of the policy development process was much less comprehensive in scope and depth and relied to a much greater extent on input from the caucus and Cabinet.<sup>49</sup> The lessened involvement by party members in the process shifted their overall influence on the election policy document, although the consultations that took place with party members means that the process would still fall within the “consultative” range on the party member input spectrum.

*v. The 2000 Election*

The Liberal Party pursued a similarly limited policy development process in 2000 as it did in 1997. Chretien again appointed Hosek to pursue the full consultation process

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Edward Goldenberg.

<sup>45</sup> Interviews with Peter Donolo, Chaviva Hosek and Edward Goldenberg.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Peter Donolo. For example, through the efforts of the PMO and the Liberal women’s group, the 1994 policy convention generated the party’s gun control policy that was eventually incorporated into the 1997 election platform.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Peter Donolo. Meetings with Cabinet and caucus were conducted in advance of the annual caucus retreat and in preparation of the 1997 budget.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek. In this regard, Chretien was not particularly concerned where ideas came from, but just with whether they were good policy or not.

<sup>49</sup> Interviews with Chaviva Hosek and Peter Donolo. In 1993, Hosek was able to consult across the country and attend all of the party’s regional annual meetings. In contrast, in 1997, Hosek was only able to attend between six and eight meetings when the election was called.

with the Cabinet, the caucus and the broader party membership.<sup>50</sup> However, and to a greater extent than in 1997, the consultations with the extra-parliamentary wing of the party were short-circuited by the early election call.<sup>51</sup> As a result, the foundations for the platform were gathered from the resolutions of past policy conventions, through consultations with and specific proposals provided by the caucus and the Cabinet and, most heavily, from the policy proposals contained in the previous budget and the Health Accord reached with the provinces.<sup>52</sup> In particular, specific reliance was placed on the commitments advanced in the autumn mini-budget and the recently signed Health Accord with the provincial governments. Given the lack of consultations with the party members, the Liberals shifted into the “elite” range of party member input for the 2000 campaign.

*vi. The 2004 Election*

Following the resignation of Chretien from the leadership of the party, the Liberals commenced a leadership process that culminated in the selection of Paul Martin as the new leader of the party. In this regard, the party’s election policy platform development process for the 2004 campaign was a multi-stage process that first began as part of Martin’s leadership campaign and involved four stages.<sup>53</sup> The first stage of the election platform drafting process occurred during the leadership campaign and involved a series of consultations by officials in Martin’s leadership campaign. These consultations consisted of roughly twenty different working groups on a variety of issues and involved both non-party experts as well as party members.<sup>54</sup> These consultations were broad in nature and the working groups were empowered to extend beyond their own membership to the broader policy community.<sup>55</sup> Each of the working groups generated a series of reports on their policy areas.<sup>56</sup>

The second stage of the platform development occurred after Martin had secured the leadership of the party. From the Liberal Party’s general policy committee, a group of between fifteen to twenty persons was recruited to form a more specific policy platform group.<sup>57</sup> This group, which consisted of campaign and party officials and members of the Prime Minister’s Office, took the policy consultation documents provided by the various working groups and distilled these reports into specific issues and position papers.<sup>58</sup> The third stage of the process involved referring the policy papers

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<sup>50</sup> Clarkson, Stephen. “The Liberal Threepeat: The Multi-System Party in the Multi-Party System” in Pammett, John H. and Dornan, Christopher, eds. The Canadian General Election of 2000. Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001, at page 38. The process did not include the policy conference as it did in 1993.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Chaviva Hosek. These consultations were part of the normal discussion process that took place in relation to the regular Cabinet and caucus retreats. See also Clarkson, “The Liberal Threepeat” in Pammett and Dornan, at page 38.

<sup>53</sup> Clarkson, Stephen. “Disaster and Recovery: Paul Martin as Political Lazarus” in Pammett, Jon H. and Dornan, Christopher, eds. The Canadian General Election of 2004. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2004 at page 43.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

to the newly appointed Cabinet for feedback. Cabinet input was in turn fed back into the election platform group for further consideration.<sup>59</sup>

The fourth and final stage of the election platform development process involved the actual compilation of the election platform itself. This was an iterative internal discussion that occurred between members of the platform committee, the party leadership, the Cabinet and the general party policy process, and was framed by a broad sense of the important issues established by the general party membership at the national convention.<sup>60</sup> Once the final document was completed, Martin had the final say over the inclusion or exclusion of particular policies and or commitments.<sup>61</sup> Overall, while the platform drafting process employed a high level of party member consultation at the outset, most of the policy development occurred in the smaller and more focused policy groups, thereby leading to this as being an “elite” process.

#### ***vii. The 2006 Election***

The process employed by Martin for developing the election platform for the 2006 campaign was intended to be similar in nature to that of the 2004 campaign (i.e. focused in an election platform policy group), although it consisted of a smaller number of people than in the previous campaign.<sup>62</sup> This group consisted of a number of Cabinet Ministers, key campaign officials and members of the Prime Minister’s Office, and it was the sole author of the election document. Input into the content of the platform was received from the Cabinet, the bureaucracy and from Martin’s own consultations, either with people from within the party itself or with persons outside of the party and government.<sup>63</sup> Given the state of the minority government and its potential to be defeated, the platform committee maintained a constant state of preparation, ultimately resulting in an election platform that was in a state of almost continuous preparedness.<sup>64</sup> As a result, much of the content of the platform reflected this perception; it was primarily derived from earlier actions of the government and relied heavily on policies proposed by Cabinet Ministers that were tied to the continued governance of their respective departments.<sup>65</sup> The continued development of the platform in the smaller policy groups indicates that the Liberals continued to employ an “elite” process.

### ***C. The Reform Party of Canada and the Canadian Alliance***

#### ***i. The 1997 Election Campaign***

The second major party in the Canadian party system that contested the 1997 election changed from the Progressive Conservatives to the Reform Party. The rationale behind the creation of the new party in 1988, and the greatest appeal to its membership, was the Reform Party’s focus on its grassroots membership and the greater input that it

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy. The information was also funneled to those persons responsible for the drafting of the Throne Speech as the two processes paralleled each other.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy. The advice from Cabinet appears to be part of the normal consultation process for the Throne Speech, the spring budget and the autumn economic statement as opposed to a specific consultation process derived by the platform group to develop the election platform.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Tim Murphy. See also Clarkson, Stephen. “How the Big Red Machine Became the Little Red Machine” in Pammett, Jon H. and Dornan, Christopher, eds. The Canadian Federal Election of 2006. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006 at pages 39-40.

provided in all elements of the governance of the party, including a high degree of participation in policy development process in particular.<sup>66</sup> Between the 1993 and 1997 elections, the party membership remained heavily involved in the party's overall policy development through its national policy conventions in 1994 and 1996.<sup>67</sup> In this regard, the Reform Party's process in developing policy resolutions for approval or rejection at the national policy convention was similar to that used by the other parties, although it did provide for a second round of local participation that the other parties did not usually provide. The process provided every riding association in the country with the authority to debate and vote on policy resolutions that, if approved at the local level, would be passed on to the national office. The national office would in turn consolidate the various resolutions, reduce them into a manageable number and compile them into one document. This document was sent back to the riding associations to vote on which policies they wanted advanced at the policy convention (i.e. the double consultation at the local level). These second round recommendations went back to the national office, which compiled a list of policy resolutions for consideration at the convention, where resolutions were accepted by a majority vote. Evidence of the impact of the membership was evident in the policy outcomes of these meetings, with the 1994 convention positioning the party's policy "solidly to the right" and the 1996 convention adding thirty-eight resolutions to the party's policy book that were "typical" Reform issues.<sup>68</sup>

While the party membership was significantly involved in the development of overall party policy, it had a more limited influence on the development of the party's election platform.<sup>69</sup> In this regard, the election platform was considered to be different than the party's broader policy book. In this regard, the platform was viewed as an election communications tool and was not viewed as a comprehensive statement of party policy.<sup>70</sup> The responsibility for the drafting of the election platform fell to the Leader's Office. In preparation for the 1997 campaign, Reform Party leader, Preston Manning, appointed Rick Anderson to supervise the development of the platform and provided him with a staff of eight to ten persons to accomplish the task. The drafting committee was free to pursue any proposals they deemed fit, provided that they remained respectful of the broader membership's policy directives. In this regard, the content of the party's broader policy book served as a limitation on what policies they could include in the election manifesto. It acted as a "fence" of which the policies in the election platform could not go beyond or contradict, although anything else was permitted.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official. The Reform Party compiled all of its policy positions into a single document, "the Blue Book", to which it added further policies as they were adopted by the national convention. Elected Members of Parliament were bound by the party's constitution to try to fulfill all of the commitments that were contained in the Blue Book.

<sup>67</sup> Ellis and Archer, at pages 113-118.

<sup>68</sup> Ellis and Archer, at pages 113 and 117 and endnote 18. Most of the new resolutions dealt with issues of justice, citizenship and immigration and taxes and economic issues and also included proposals for referenda on capital punishment and abortion.

<sup>69</sup> The election platform was a much different device than the policy book. The purpose of the platform was as a communications device and was not the party's "manifesto" of policy commitments.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official. In particular, it was not possible to include every policy in the election platform, primarily due to the size and volume of the documents, but also because some of the proposals were contradictory, unworkable, or unpopular with the broader public.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

Anderson led the process and the determination of the platform content was derived from a number of sources: caucus opinion, popularity of issues in the media, trends in public opinion, broader party policy, and private members' bills that had been introduced by the Members of Parliament.<sup>72</sup> The platform drafting process also received input from the elected caucus, both at the outset in terms of initial idea generation and subsequently by maintaining information throughout the process.<sup>73</sup> Once the various policies in the election platform were completed, they were given over to a communications specialist for alteration into more marketable language.<sup>74</sup> After the communications revisions were completed, the leader's office made the document more political by emphasizing the key policies to be emphasized during the course of the election campaign and through the inclusion of criticism of the governing Liberals.<sup>75</sup> Overall, the election platform drafting committee was not limited in terms of the specific policies it could pursue, other than by the broad parameters established by the party membership.<sup>76</sup> While the popularity of particular issues and solutions was considered, the content of the platform was strongly influenced by the party's own self-definition: who it was, what it stood for and what the membership believed in.<sup>77</sup> The highly focused and limited party member involvement in the development and drafting of the election campaign policy platform means that the Reform Party employed an "elite" approach for the 1997 election.

#### *ii. The 2000 Election*

In an attempt to broaden the appeal of the Reform Party beyond its base in Western Canada and achieve national representation, officials in the party organized a "United Alternative" conference in early 1999. The purpose of this conference was to provide the groundwork for the creation of single right-of-centre party to challenge the governing Liberals through the merger of existing parties and resulted in the formation of the Canadian Alliance. However, despite the changes made to broaden the appeal of the Reform Party, the election policy platform development process employed by the new Canadian Alliance was similar to that of the Reform Party in 1997. However, given that the platform drafting process was commenced during the course of the new party's initial leadership contest, the responsibility for election policy development rested with a team of individuals representing each of the candidates.<sup>78</sup> This three-person team provided direction and oversight to the process while the research bureau of the party undertook most of the overall drafting of the platform. Most of the policies were generated out of the party's policy book, although they were refined and narrowed to a great extent.<sup>79</sup> After the research bureau completed a draft of the election platform, the document was

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson was appointed to the team on behalf of Manning, Rod Love on behalf of Stockwell Day and Al Campbell for Tom Long.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official. The Canadian Alliance policy book was similar to the Reform Party's Blue Book, although it was less "extensive and organic" than the Blue Book. It was put together by Diane Ablonczy and ratified by the members of the new party at the convention that created the Canadian Alliance.

referred to a communications specialist to make the document more marketable before being returned for final revisions.<sup>80</sup> The elected caucus was also provided with a copy of the draft platform for input before the new leader accepted the draft platform.<sup>81</sup> As with the Reform Party, the Canadian Alliance was a policy-driven party that permitted members a large role in the development of the party's overall policy process. Accordingly, the only perceived limitation imposed on the platform drafting committee was that the platform had to be consistent with the overall party policy.<sup>82</sup> The content and focus of the election platform spoke to issues that reflected the Canadian Alliance view of the world and were generally driven by the party's own culture.<sup>83</sup> The election platform drafting process remained "elite" driven in terms of its development and drafting.

***D. The Conservative Party of Canada***  
***i. The 2004 Campaign***

Following the inability of either of the two right-of-centre parties to be able to defeat the Liberals or one another, merger talks between the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives resurfaced after the 2000 election. With the installation of new leaders in each party, the process culminated in the creation of another new party, the Conservative Party of Canada, shortly before the 2004 election campaign and under the guidance of the former leader of the Canadian Alliance, Stephen Harper. This development posed two main difficulties for the newly formed party. First, the new party had to incorporate the elements of the two predecessor parties into one coherent organization, a task made all the more difficult by the fact that the parties had been systematically trying to eliminate one another for more than a decade. Second, the party and its leader were given very little time to organize and begin preparations before an election. In attempting to address both of these difficulties, Harper commissioned Peter McKay, the former leader of the Progressive Conservatives, to undertake a study of the existing policy platforms of the constituent parties and identify areas of commonality between the two.<sup>84</sup> McKay's report identified that about ninety-five percent of the platform material of the two original parties was the same or substantially similar.<sup>85</sup> The McKay report was the sole extent of the policy work that had been completed at the time of the election call, as there had been no time to hold a national policy convention or consult with the party membership.<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, in need of coherent policy positions to be used in the campaign, Harper requested that members of the party's research group draft a platform document.<sup>87</sup> The draft election platform was based heavily on the McKay document and presented to the parliamentary caucus for their input on three occasions before being subsequently approved by Harper.<sup>88</sup> Given the limited timeframe

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Reform Party Official.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay. See also Ellis, Faron and Woolstencroft, Peter. "New Conservatives, Old Realities" in Pammett and Dornan, eds. The Canadian General Election of 2004 at page 89.

<sup>88</sup> Ellis, Faron and Woolstencroft, Peter. "New Conservatives, Old Realities" in Pammett and Dornan, eds. The Canadian General Election of 2004 at page 89.

by which the Conservatives could prepare for the upcoming election and the process used to create an election policy platform, it is clear that the Conservatives employed an “elite” process.

**ii. *The 2006 Election***

The Conservatives used the period between the two election campaigns to assess and reassess what had occurred in the 2004 campaign, consolidate the organization of the party and begin preparations for the next election. As part of this process, the party determined that it had to put in place a comprehensive policy regime in order to provide the party with a clear identity and combat allegations that the party and the leader harboured a secret agenda.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, the Conservatives held a national party policy convention in the spring of 2005. In advance of the convention, Harper commissioned a grassroots approach to policy development through a request that each electoral constituency in the country provide the national office with policy resolutions derived from local policy goals.<sup>90</sup> These policy resolutions were sent to regional organizations of the party for consolidation before being forwarded to the leader’s office for further consolidation before consideration at the national convention.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, Harper commissioned McKay to also provide policy proposals to the leader’s office for consideration at the national policy convention.<sup>92</sup> The national policy convention required a two-stage approval process for potential proposals for formal party policy. The first stage consisted of a series of issue-oriented workshop panels that discussed, debated and voted on the proposals under consideration. Proposals could only be forwarded on to the second stage, the entire delegate approval stage, if they received majority support at the workshop level. At the entire delegate stage, policies were again subjected to a majority approval before adoption as official party policy.

Following the convention, Harper and one of the members of his staff drafted a version of the election platform.<sup>93</sup> The document was primarily-based and heavily built on the policies approved by the party membership at the convention, and in some cases, mirrored the exact commitments adopted in Montreal. However, the party policy was perceived as the long-term goals of the party and Harper felt that departure from the specifics of party policy for the development of the election platform was permissible.<sup>94</sup> Harper subsequently provided the draft platform to a communications expert to make the document more appealing to the media and public before its adoption and use.<sup>95</sup> While the drafting the election campaign was completed by only two persons, the close

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay. Harper and the party leadership did not impose any formal structure at the riding level, allowing each organization to determine its process for determining its own policy resolutions.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay. The assistant referred to is Bruce Cameron, then Harper’s Chief of Research.

<sup>94</sup> Ellis, Faron and Woolstencroft, Peter. “A Change of Government, Not a Change of Country: The Conservatives and the 2006 Election” in Pammett and Dornan, The Canadian Federal Election of 2006 at page 76. In particular, Harper and Cameron opted for an election commitment of reducing the level of the GST as opposed to reducing personal income tax levels as the party’s new official policy called for.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Geoff Norquay. This action was taken as a direct response to the internal criticism from within the Conservative Party following the 2004 election that the platform was too “wonkish” and not understandable to or by the public.

temporal link to the national policy convention coupled with the reflection of party commitments arising out of that event in the final election platform are indicative of the consultative approach employed by Harper and Cameron in the creation of the 2006 election campaign document.

#### **IV. Discussion**

Party member influence in the policy-making process of parties is broader than has been previously considered. While the employment of elite forms of participation at the election platform drafting stage of party policy development processes support arguments of the limited influence of party members, it is evident that there are other forms of participation at the final stage of policy development as well as other stages of policy development. In this regard, party member involvement has to be measured on both horizontal and vertical measures to fully understand the level of influence that party members have in any particular party and during any particular election. For example, while party members in the Reform Party may have been rightfully upset with their level of input into the actual process used to draft the 1997 election platform, falling within the elite level, their influence over the policies included in that document were considerable, both in terms of the policies advanced and the overall values and ideology pursued by the party. Similarly, Conservative Party of Canada members also exerted a relatively high degree of influence over the contents of the 2006 Conservative election platform by virtue of the values and policy themes pursued advocated at the 2005 national policy convention.

The consideration of the election policy platform development processes of major parties in Canada over the period of 1984 to 2006 has also demonstrated that parties change the nature of the election platform processes that they employ. In this regard, the willingness of party leadership to allow greater participation may play a significant role in the level of party member influence. In addition, it also demonstrates that political factors and electoral context may also play a significant role in enabling parties to pursue a broad participatory process or one that is more limited and elite focused. Liberal leader John Turner provided for a much more consultative approach in the lead up to the 1988 election campaign than in 1984, likely as much due to the demands of the party members as to the circumstances surrounding the election call in 1984. Overall, the result of the analysis that the pessimism surrounding the policy-making potential of party members may be both inaccurate at more general levels of ideology and values and overstated at the more narrow levels of party and election policy development. Parties remain important and potentially viable options for citizen participation in the broader policy-making process.

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