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**Word Power:
Manifestations of Power in the Environmental Discourse
of the Canadian Government**

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Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the MA in Communication

Department of Communication
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Abstract

This thesis presents an analysis of the manner in which the current Canadian government, under Stephen Harper, has been using specific linguistic strategies in their environmental discourse in an effort to maintain their power. This research was undertaken utilizing a combination of content analysis and critical discourse, using Edelman's (1967) typology of language as a guiding framework. In total, nine speeches and 49 press releases were analyzed using this methodology. The findings indicate that government language influences government power insofar as government language functions as a type of strategic action that government can use to mobilize support amongst members of its target audiences.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

It has been almost a century since Max Weber (1971, p.28, emphasis in the original) defined the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory.”¹ Since the time of Weber’s writing a broad consensus has emerged among political theorists favouring this definition of how governments maintain power.² Nonetheless, Giddens (1985) and Foucault (1995) have noted that the frequency of direct physical violence being enacted by the government and its delegates on citizens has decreased over time in Western nations. According to Foucault (1995) this is, in part, due to the fact that no one would want to obey an institution that only says no. Likewise, Giddens (1985) links the reduction in the use of physical violence to the increasingly private nature of executions, and the prohibition of this punishment in many Western nations.

As Western governments have moved away from foremost on physical violence as the central tool to maintain power, they have become increasingly dependent on the use of communicative strategies (Foucault, 1988; 1995). Sandra Braman (2006, p.1) points out that although information management has been a part of governance since ancient times, in recent years this function has become amplified “in the extent to which governments deliberately, explicitly, and consistently control information creation, processing, flows, and use to exercise power.” Expanding on this argument, Rose (2000) and Kozolanka (2006) have expressed concerns about the use of persuasive government language in Canada, and its effects on democracy. They suggest that while the project of Western

¹While there have been ongoing debates regarding whether ‘force’ and ‘violence’ can be used as synonyms, Weber (1971) uses the two words as synonyms throughout the text from which this notion emerged, and subsequent writers have done the same in discussing Weber’s work. See also Garver, 1973; Coady, 1999; Betz, 1977; Wolff, 1999.

²See for example Hoffman, 1995; Wolff, 1999; Goerner & Thompson, 1996.

democracy is based on the notion of citizens having access to information that allows them to make well-founded decisions, the proliferation of persuasive language coming from the Canadian government has impeded the ability of Canadian citizens to properly make informed decisions.

One area in which this process appears to be manifesting itself in the Canadian context is in the environmental discourse of the current government. In the light of this situation, this thesis investigates the linguistic and rhetorical techniques employed in its environmental discourse to foster support for, and the maintenance of, its political power. The central research question driving this study is: How does the language used by the government of Canada in the environmental domain influence the maintenance of its political power?

1.1: Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters. This first chapter has provided an overview of the thesis. In the second chapter, major contending perspectives on the relationship between language and power are examined. Particular attention is given to the two main perspectives of power – *power to* and *power over* and their respective implications vis-à-vis the maintenance of government power.

The third chapter presents the methodology utilized in the thesis, while the fourth presents the data obtained. In this thesis, content analysis is used in combination with critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze speeches and press releases on environmental issues released by the Canadian government between August 2007 and December 2007. In total, nine speeches and 49 press releases produced by the Canadian federal government on the topic of the environment were analyzed. The framework adopted to structure the

content analysis is based on the taxonomy of political language developed by Edelman (1967).

The fifth chapter offers an analysis of the findings. The linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified in the speeches and press releases suggest that the Canadian government is using persuasive language that is designed to foster support for its environmental policies and to encourage perceptions that the government is working to protect the interests of the public. Finally, the sixth chapter concludes by summarizing the key findings emerging from the thesis and addressing the main limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2: Defining Language and Power in the Political Context

Canada is a vast country that is home to a relatively small population of increasingly diverse citizens. The country has long struggled to maintain a unified national identity, particularly following the invigoration of French-Canadian nationalism and the government sanctioning of increased non-European immigration in the 1960s (Abu-Laban & Stasiulis, 1992). The sparsely populated nature of Canada also has presented difficulties with regard to promoting and maintaining a unified national identity. Leslie Armour (1981), for instance, has noted that as a country of firmly entrenched regional identities, Canada in many ways lacks the sense of common identity found in other countries. Faced with this diversity of population the Canadian government must contend with ensuring that its official communications effectively engage all segments of the population.

Strong government-citizen communication has long been considered central to Western liberal-democracy.³ To this end, the Canadian government recognizes that it must communicate with its people and provide them with information because “[i]nformation is necessary for Canadians [...] to participate actively and meaningfully in the democratic process” (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2002, p.1). In the words of former Prime Minister McKenzie King, “where there is little or no public opinion, there is likely to be bad government, which sooner or later becomes autocratic government” (Task Force on Government Information, 1969, p.3).

Over the years, various governments have worked to ensure that their communication policies are appropriate for the unique Canadian context. A particularly detailed examination of government communication in Canada took place in August 1968 when

³ This form of democracy has its roots in ancient Greece and is founded on the principle of deliberation and open discussion (Hauser, 2004).

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau launched the Task Force on Government Information (TFGI). In its final report, the TFGI recommended the establishment of a stronger government communication apparatus focusing on advertising, and designed to effectively engage large portions of the Canadian population in all regions. Acknowledging that “[t]he distinction between partisan information and ‘pure’ official government information may be forever gray,” the TFGI also called for the creation of checks and balances to ensure that communications emanating from this new apparatus did not stray into the realm of propaganda (TFGI, 1969, p.50).⁴

In spite of the lofty ideals of democratic interaction such as those underpinning the work of the TFGI, it must be noted that government communication always is executed with a particular intent. As Rose, (2000, p.21) points out, it “is never ‘innocent’ in the sense of merely providing information or responding to public demand.”⁵ This is a serious concern for adherents to traditional notions of liberal-democracy, because a public that is not properly informed about, and/or engaged with, political issues due to skewed information has a decreased ability to effectively participate in democratic functions. Such concerns also allude to the power of language insofar as they point to the potential of information provided by governments to be manipulated in order to support the goal of remaining in power (Hart, Jarvis, Jennings & Smith-Howell, 2005; Hanssen, 2000; Edelman, 1967; Bourdieu, 1991; and Fox & Miller, 2007).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The discussion in the next section examines the relationship between language and the political sphere. In the section 2.2, the

⁴ This caveat highlights the dangers inherent to government communication.

⁵ See also Hauser (2004)

relationship between language and specific notions of political power is discussed. The chapter concludes by presenting the central research question guiding this thesis.

2.1: Language in the Political Sphere

The centrality of government communication to liberal-democracy begs the question as to precisely *how* language functions in political settings. Some in the liberal-democratic tradition suggest that it is a conduit for the sharing of ideas to establish and achieve collective goals. Others, who view power as stemming from domination, argue that political language is a tool for the establishment and maintenance of hierarchical power relations. The perspectives advanced by proponents of these two contending schools of thought are elaborated upon below.

The liberal-democratic tradition is founded on the premise that language is politically enabling and allows the open exchange of thoughts and ideas between concerned parties. According to this perspective, political language “counts as the organ of transparency, political power, and, in the final analysis, the advancement of universal freedom” (Hanssen, 2000, p.160). Policy decisions are understood as being based on careful deliberation, with the ability to make compelling and logical arguments being highly valued (Hanssen, 2000; Hauser, 2004). This perspective’s faith in the ability of people to use language in a transparent manner implies a belief in the essential goodness of human nature, and on the rationality of speech.⁶

Expanding upon the liberal-democratic view of language, Arendt (1998, p.26) suggests that language is the essence of being political, and that to be political means that all

⁶ The concern with rationality in language has been taken up by post-structuralists such as de Man (1986) and Derrida (1998), who challenge the idea that language can ever be rational. They maintain that since language always is figurative, and is simply a series of arbitrary signs based on endless cultural and social norms, it always is subverted by endless possibilities for misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and multiple other meanings besides those intended by the speaker. Thus according to this view language is, at its foundation, irrational, with fissures in the intended meaning found throughout language.

decisions are made “through words and persuasion and not through force or violence”. In her formulation, violence is the opposite of language, because it represents a complete breakdown of communication. As such, her perspective assumes that people in government are honest and transparent in their communication with citizens. Noting that when official language is transparent and open, the result is a powerful government, she claims that “power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company” (Arendt, 1958, p.200). This view of political language suggests that power is not present unless government-citizen communication is uncoerced and all citizens are fully aware of all issues at stake. This is because Arendt’s conception of power is founded on the notion that power “springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse” (1958, p.200). Put simply, in Arendt’s formulation power cannot exist in situations where citizens are not fully able to participate in this action-in-concert.

While Arendt rests much of her argument on the ability of governments to effectively communicate with citizens, she readily admits that language cannot always be trusted as the conduit of her communicative vision of government. To this end, she cautions that “[w]ords can be relied upon only so long as one is sure that their function is to reveal and not conceal” (Arendt, 1969, n.p.). It follows, therefore, that her ideal government is one that is committed to genuine, open dialogue with citizens, and willing to accept that public opinion may not always be favourable to the interests of those in power.⁷

A less idealistic vision of the motivations behind government communications is provided by Edelman (1967, p.114), who views language as a tool for governments to “win

⁷ In contrast to this view, John Durham Peters (2000) has suggested that dialogue can be just as tyrannical as one-way communication. He argues that dialogue is ill-suited to the types of discussions needed in a large-scale democracy, and that the creation of egalitarian communities depends more on a pre-existing sense of solidarity and mutual ideals than it does on the open communication described by Arendt.

the acquiescence of those whose lasting support is needed”.⁸ According to Edelman (1988) the central task of political communicators is to ensure the dominance of language that legitimizes the government’s perspectives, and encourages support or quiescence regarding government policies. In Edelman’s formulation, the political beliefs and behaviours of the public are shaped more by political language than by the physical reality of the political situation they experience. According to this view, one’s choice of terms defines how those being addressed judge a topic, and influences how the perspective conveyed will be received.

Edelman argues that our beliefs are shaped by four different types of language. They are outlined below.

- **Hortatory Language:** This type of language involves the explicit and implicit use of inferences, premises, and conclusions to appeal for public support. For example, frequent appeals to the public by political figures provide the impression that the public plays an important role in political decision-making. Edelman argues, however, that these appeals actually play very little role in policy-making because they tend to function as a strategy for government actions rather than as ways of seeking public input.
- **Legal Language:** This type of language involves the citing of treaties, statutes, bills, contracts and other such documents and may have ambiguous meaning for the public. Edelman (1967, p.139) argues that “laymen either never see such language or find it incomprehensible,” while experts who do have a nuanced understanding of it are aware that many legal terms are ambiguous in their meaning. The technical,

⁸ Hauser takes a similar stance when he states that government language “may lead to manipulation for personal gain under the guise of the common good” (2004, p.1).

complex-sounding characteristics of legal language are seen to foster the comforting belief that government decision-making is objective and precise, while also allowing citizens who wish to look more closely at such language to reach their own conclusions.

- **Administrative Language:** This type of language is similar to legal language in that it includes references to regulations and rules. However, it differs from legal language in that administrative language generally stems from administrative officials rather than elected representatives. As such, it is usually aimed at an audience that must directly obey instructions, often immediately, and is often seen by the public as authoritative and impenetrable.
- **Bargaining Language:** This language type is used to gain support for a political stance, with those parties involved trying to convey the impression that they are bargaining in order to achieve the best result for the public. When bargaining language is used, the speaker or writer offers a deal, rather than making an appeal. This style of language appears in situations in which stakeholders have incompatible values and are trying to give the impression that they are bargaining in order to achieve the best results for the public.

Each of the above language types deals “with the relationships of people to government that are regarded, and taught, as basic in our culture” (Edelman, 1967, p.133). They are designed to maintain popular consensus and political stability while also allowing elites the ability to make policy relatively freely. However, Edelman points out that these language types are not generally used consciously by elites to deceive the public. Rather, these language types are prevalent because the ambiguities to which they give rise provide

elites with the psychological satisfaction that they are doing what elites are supposed to do – i.e., appease a public made up of widely varied interests.

The public, in turn, is seen by Edelman as implicitly supporting the use of such vague language because it allows them to believe that their needs are being addressed, and that their opinions are important.⁹ In his famous essay *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell (2006) also argues that public language often is marked by a lack of precision and a staleness of imagery. According to Orwell, this is created through

- the use of stale metaphors that are so overused that they no longer evoke vivid imagery;
- verbal false limbs, or the addition of nouns or adjectives onto a verb that could stand on its own in a sentence (e.g., *make contact with*, *by examination of*, and *having regard to*);
- pretentious diction when simple language will suffice; and
- the use of ambiguous words whose meanings can change drastically depending on one's perspective (e.g., *values*, *freedom*, and *justice*).

Orwell argues that one appeal of vague language is that it makes writing easier, and requires less thought than would the careful selection of precise words to convey clear meaning. Consequently, the author of vague language and his or her audience need to think less than would otherwise be the case. He notes that such 'mindless' speech is highly conducive to political conformity because vagueness, stale metaphors that no longer provoke thought and wordiness all contribute to language that names and discusses things without calling upon the listener to think about or to envision what is being discussed.

Laziness is not the only rationale Orwell provides for the use of ambiguous language in political contexts. He also suggests that "political speech and writing are largely the

⁹ In their analysis of public administration, Fox and Miller (2007) build upon Edelman's formulations by suggesting that as a symbolic system, language is capable of shaping a large portion of what people believe to be reality. For them, language allows "the ordering of the chaos; symbols impose a unity where none existed, and such unities are malleable and changeable" (2007, p.102). In their view, language is a politically dangerous tool precisely because of the symbolic power that it wields.

defense of the indefensible” (Orwell, 2006, p.248). Artfully vague language, therefore, can cover content that is unlikely to be popular with the public. Expanding on this notion, Orwell (2006, p.248) notes that “[w]hen there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms.” In his view, the political sphere merits heavy criticism because insincere politicians are to blame for much of the vague, wordy, and confusing language in the world.

In line with Orwell’s critique, McGee (1980) also credits political language with the ability to control the public’s understanding of reality. However, unlike Edelman and Orwell, he does not see this power stemming wholly from the vagueness of political language. Instead, he argues that the shaping of the public consciousness occurs through the transmission of *ideologies* that are perpetuated primarily through language. To this end, McGee (1980, p.5) suggests that “ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behaviour.” This leads him to conclude that through the use of specific diction and verbal strategies, a specific mass political consciousness can be created.

In McGee’s formulation, political language is characterized by the use of slogans, which are a type of ideograph. McGee (1980, p.15) defines an ideograph as

an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behaviour and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behaviour and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable.

He argues that study of the ideographs in political language reveals various structures of political consciousness. These structures, and the ideographs of which they are composed, are able, he claims, to create and maintain power, and to form the reality of every citizen

living in a given political sphere. As such, he views the use of ideographs as playing an important role in the maintenance of social order.

Without prior persuasion, a citizen who considers retaliation against political power cannot be stopped if s/he is convinced his/her actions are warranted. Punishment would only be visited upon the individual after the crime. As a result, the best way to maintain order in society, in McGee's view, is to have *already persuaded* members of the general public to adhere to a variety of learned predispositions through the effective use of ideographs. An example of how this could prevent political difficulties may be seen in the tale of Jeffrey Monaghan, a temporary employee with Environment Canada.

In May 2007 Monaghan was charged with leaking a draft version of the Canadian government's action plan on climate change to the press. The government, unable to prevent the leak, was subsequently grilled by opposition parties regarding the heightened secrecy the Conservatives had imposed on many government agencies.¹⁰ In McGee's formulation, had Monaghan been fully conditioned to follow predispositions of the dominant ideology, the Canadian government would have avoided the leak situation, as well as the resultant political fall-out.

It is important to recognize that McGee is careful to note that the use of ideographs to maintain social order cannot be considered a tool of absolute control held by elites. No one is forced to behave according to learned predispositions, rather, they are conditioned to do so. One domain through which this conditioning takes place is language. It relies upon "a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behaviour and belief" (McGee, 1980, p.6). These words having been taught, citizens can be expected

¹⁰ For example, the non-governmental organization Democracy Watch criticized the government for trying to frighten civil servants into maintaining a "cult of secrecy" within the government ("Leak Plugged?" 2007)

to respond to words such as *law*, *liberty*, and *tyranny*¹¹ in a predictable and automatic manner within a given political sphere of influence.

Bourdieu (1991) similarly suggests that language has the ability to convey power and violence by paying testimony to the power and legitimacy of the organization that the speaker represents. In other words, power is external to language. This is not to say, however, that the language of power holders does not have certain characteristics. Bourdieu (1991, p.109) argues that the stylistic features of power-holders include “routinization, stereotyping and neutralization, [which] all stem from the position occupied in a competitive field by these persons entrusted with delegated authority”. He calls this language of power *official language*. It is language that “within the territorial limits of that unit, imposes itself on the whole population as the only legitimate language” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.45).

Official language is intimately connected with the state in terms of its creation and its uses. As states form, a unified linguistic style concomitantly develops, in part through the writing of laws and statutes. Once a widely accepted official language has been developed, Bourdieu argues, the conditions are right for “the establishment of relations of linguistic domination,” that he characterizes as impersonal and anonymous (1991, p.46). As suggested by Edelman and McGee, this language may be seen as helping to construct the public’s understanding of social reality. However, Bourdieu takes the latter view one step further by claiming that this social reality is made to look so natural that the arbitrary nature of the reality presented is not viewed as arbitrary by the general public. As such, according

¹¹ These terms, or ideographs, are bound to the cultures they function within, and the understanding of their usage creates a sense of belonging in a given society.

to Bourdieu, official language is intended to form a public that is quiescent to the wishes of those in power.

Foucault (1984, p.110) also expands upon the notion of language and politics, noting that “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.” He argues that discourse is controlled by those in power in order to prevent its effective use by the masses as a tool to upset the existing social structure that keeps elites in power. He suggests that in the light of the power held by language, the political realm is particularly restrictive in the language that is used by its elites. Through this restricted discourse events can be controlled, and only rarified groups of individuals have access to this privileged discourse (Foucault, 1984).

According to Arendt, the language used by the government in addressing the people helps foster an open channel of two-way communication in which citizens can express their needs, and through which government officials respond accordingly. Edelman, McGee, Bourdieu, and Foucault, on the other hand, view political language as a tool used consciously and unconsciously by governments to persuade the public that it is being listened to when, in fact, governments often act with impunity. Whether political power is based on open communication, limits available knowledge, and/or prevents the formation of oppositional ideas, language is an important component of its establishment and maintenance. With this in mind, a discussion of conceptions of power is presented in the next section with the goal of establishing a comprehensive vision of the dynamics within which political language operates.

2.2: Concepts of Power

In order to outline the key components of arguments that have been made about power, the discussion presented below is structured in accordance with the two main schools of thought regarding this concept: *power over* and *power to*. According to Stewart (2001), proponents of the notion of *power over* equate power with domination. Power, in this perspective is viewed as an ability to achieve specific ends by strategically making use of available means. In this sense, power is often seen as manifesting itself in a context of clashing actors, each fighting for their own selfish ends.

Proponents of *power to*, by contrast, tend to focus on ideas of community and debate. In this formulation, power relates to the ability to act in concert to achieve collective goals that have been established through uncoerced communication between interested stakeholders. The key assumption underpinning this perspective is the idea that people can work together without coercion or selfish motivations.

2.2.1: Power Over

The *power over* school of thought has traditionally been the prevailing perspective in scholarly works focusing on the nature of power. Dahl's (1957) seminal article "The Concept of Power" is the classic work in this perspective. His statement that "*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do," (Dahl, 1957, 202-203) has become standard phraseology for understanding power as domination. Dahl argues that it is the decision of *B* to support the acts of *A* that demonstrates the presence of power, and that the measurement of the amount of power held by *A* can be achieved by comparing the frequency with which an actor achieves the desired

response to his or her acts. This argument suggests that power is always tangible and measurable through an examination of concrete decisions.¹²

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) criticized this action-oriented view of power on the grounds that power also can manifest itself such that decision-making activities may be limited or even restricted. They label this phenomenon as *nondecision-making*. Nondecision-making refers to the political practice of consciously focusing on safe issues “by manipulating the dominant community values, myths, and political institutions and procedures” (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963, p.632). Bachrach and Baratz assert that nondecisions are potentially more important in understanding the workings of power than decision-making because it is through non-decisions that *A* can ensure that those aspects of the political realm open to public consideration are limited to those issues which are relatively harmless to *A* (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962).

This leads them to argue that in order to understand power a researcher should begin by “investigating the particular ‘mobilization of bias’ in the institution under scrutiny” (1962, p.952). In examining mobilization of bias, Bachrach and Baratz refer to the oft-cited formulation of E.E. Schattschneider:

All forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because *organization is the mobilization of bias*. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out” (1960, p.71, emphasis in the original).

Bachrach and Baratz assert that the mobilization of bias is often ignored when considering power because power becomes *obvious* to the observer only when decisions are made.

For example, a press release issued by the Prime Minister’s office may indicate that the government has invoked a new environmental policy. Those who follow politics may be

¹² See also Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) for an elaboration of this perspective.

aware that the opposition party had lobbied hard for a different policy than the one implemented. In Dahl's formulation, one could easily discern that the party in government has the most power because its perspective was victorious, and it remained popular with the public. Bachrach and Baratz, on the other hand, advocate scratching beneath the surface to examine why the perspective of the ruling party is popular with the public, and how such a perspective has been presented to the public to ensure a favourable response to the new environmental policy. According to their formulation, it is only by studying the values and biases at the heart of a political system that one can achieve a deeper understanding of the context in which decision-making takes place. Such an exercise might, for example, reveal that the ruling party consciously worked to create a positive 'spin' about their new policy in order to ensure its popularity among citizens.

While acknowledging that power may be exercised through decisions/nondecisions and the mobilization of bias,¹³ Lukes (1974) critiqued Bachrach and Baratz's assumption that nondecisions are always consciously chosen. To this end, he posits that the socio-political system as a whole can be biased in such a way that the bias is perpetuated *without conscious intervention* on the part of any individual. In terms of the example above, Lukes' view of power implies that the entire campaign surrounding the policy may have been organized in such a way as to ensure success, but not entirely through conscious intervention. This suggests that the maintenance of power may result from a range of phenomena (e.g. social norms and attitudes) other than *or* including conscious behaviours.

Moving beyond traditional conceptions of *power over*, Bourdieu (1991) introduces the notion of 'symbolic power.' This type of power is a form of domination that is perpetuated

¹³ Lukes notes that Bachrach and Baratz's inclusion of the mobilization of bias in discussions of power marks an important advancement in the field.

by elites, insofar as they are able to enter the realm of politics by virtue of the fact that they have been raised to have the proper skills, notably the ability to utilize the proper style of language and rhetoric.¹⁴ As such, those elites who are in power are seen to have the ability to mobilize symbolic power to construct reality through manipulation of the social world. However, they are not entirely to blame for the subjugation of the masses. According to Bourdieu, all individuals are actively complicit in their subjection to domination by those in power because such power can survive only if its subjects believe in its legitimacy and the legitimacy of individuals in power (Thompson, 1991). Indeed, symbolic power is seen to be maintained “only so long as the participants fail to recognize it for what it really is, i.e., an act of domination” (Topper, 2001, p.36). In other words, it is through the manifestation of symbolic power that the public remains blissfully unaware of their poor lot in life, assuming that it is natural and in their best interest to conform to the existing power structure.

Closely connected to Bourdieu’s delineation of symbolic power is his notion of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1990; 1991). As described by Bourdieu, violence extends beyond the standard boundaries of physical force to a “gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.127). He argues that symbolic violence is more effective than its overt counterpart because it is characterized by the imposition of arbitrary expression and knowledge on social reality in order to maintain domination by one group over another. In other words, symbolic violence functions through misrecognition. It works

¹⁴ According to Bourdieu’s formulation, using the right style or dialect of language is an important reflection of an agent’s position, and helps to enforce power relations.

only if people fail to see it for what it is – a tool of domination.¹⁵ In a play on Weber's formulation of the state as holding a monopoly on the use of physical force, Bourdieu (1991, p.239) characterizes the state as holding "the *monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence*" (emphasis in the original). In Bourdieu's formulation, the Canadian government may be viewed as partaking in symbolic violence through the act of providing communications to the public that aim to persuade citizens to be content with the status quo in spite of the inequalities it may perpetuate.

Another variation on the notion of *power over* is provided by Foucault (1980), who explicitly equates power with domination. However, Foucault's view of domination differs from the other perspectives discussed above. Instead of a citizen-state oriented model of power, he proposes a decentralized, diffuse model in which relationships between all individuals, regardless of their status in society, help to perpetuate the social norms that maintain power (Foucault, 1980; 1995). According to Foucault (1980, p.98), "individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application," carrying and perpetuating existing power structures in their daily lives.

Foucault posits that disciplinary power is the true force behind power, and that powerful social institutions such as government mask the presence of this more sinister and insidious form of power. He sees disciplinary power as carrying with it discourses that perpetuate rules, or norms. Indeed, he suggests that states can only function based on the power relations established by disciplinary power discourses insofar as these discourses normalize the government's presence, and establish the need to obey its rules and regulations (Foucault, 1980). According to Foucault (1995, p.106), disciplinary power is so

¹⁵ Commenting on Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence, Breen (2001, p.31), writes that this type of violence is perpetuated through "the unseen ways that symbolic forms become instruments for constituting and sustaining structured inequalities."

pervasive throughout society that it appears as a necessity, and acts “while concealing itself beneath the gentle force of nature.”

In this formulation of the *power over* thesis, disciplinary power is diametrically opposed to the traditional power held by governments, which Foucault terms sovereign power. The latter is characterized as repressive and capable only of saying no (Foucault, 1980). The grotesque public displays of sovereign power evidenced in public executions in the past demonstrate the way in which this type of power attempted to frighten the masses into obedience. However, Foucault (1980, p.119) notes that this was not a particularly successful strategy for maintaining power, for “[i]f power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think anyone would be brought to obey it?”. Thus sovereign power, he argues, needs the support of disciplinary power in order to ensure that the public is reliably supportive of those in power. On the other hand, disciplinary power also needs the support of sovereign power because it provides a tangible cover and symbolic figurehead for the obscure, coercive and ever-present activities of disciplinary power.¹⁶

In summary, the *power over* perspective asserts that power is domination. While some scholars, such as Dahl, argue that power can be measured by examining specific decisions made by those in power, others, notably Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes, argue that it is a

¹⁶ It may be argued that Lukes, Bourdieu and Foucault all describe a phenomenon that is strikingly similar to the Marxist concept of false consciousness. This notion maintains that the peoples’ blindness to the ideological powers at work through materialist, class-based structures keeps them from understanding and achieving their real interests (Hall, 2001; Béland, 2006; Meyerson, 1991). Bourdieu acknowledges the Marxist lineage of some of his ideas (1991), but Lukes’ work is not Marxist in the strictest sense (Béland, 2006), and Foucault is vocally anti-Marx, specifying that power relations do not simply occur “on the frontier between classes” (1995, p.27). Indeed, the term false consciousness implies a very specific perspective in which the means of production are controlled by one class and worked by another in such a way that the ruling class appears to be “a servant of communal interests” (Meyerson, 1991, p.2). While these three thinkers may have similar notions to false consciousness - though they use other terms, such as disciplinary power, the third face of power, symbolic power, or mobilization of bias - their theories lack the economic focus necessary to accurately label their concepts with this Marxist term.

much more complex phenomenon requiring examination of overarching social structures that influence the actions taken by those in authority, and motivate the masses to obey them. Bourdieu and Foucault on the other hand have suggested that power relations are perpetuated throughout society through symbolic means, notably language.

The emphasis on domination in the *power over* perspective stands in stark contrast with the noncoercive, communicative approach to power taken by thinkers of the *power to* school of thought. This approach is discussed below.

2.2.2: *Power To*

Those who subscribe to the *power to* school of thought tend to focus on a group-oriented, communications-centred conception of power and tends to centre on “political conditions, characteristics and implications of power as action in concert” (Stewart, 2001, p.6). This differs from the notion of *power over* in that power here is viewed as being built on a foundation of agreement and collective discussion. Power in the sense of *power to* refers to power that is given to *A*, who has the right to make decisions that take precedence over those made by *B*, in order to ensure the overall workings of the collective system.

For example, Parsons (1960, p.181) argues that power is “the generalized capacity of a social system to get things done in the interest of collective goals.”¹⁷ As such, the exercise of power requires integration of the collectivity into the process of developing goals. In contrast to the notion of power as something that involves the domination of *A* over *B*,

¹⁷ In the words of Lukes (1974, p.27), Parsons sees power as “the use of authoritative decisions to further collective goals”.

Parsons suggests that power allows all parties involved in a power relation to benefit because the central goals upon which a power structure is based are collective.¹⁸

Implicit within Parsons' concept of power is the notion of plurality insofar as he maintains that power requires the development of goals stemming from a broad range of perspectives presented by members of society. In this regard, there appears to be echoes of Hannah Arendt's understanding of power within his postulations. Arendt (1958) argued that plurality is the central condition of human life, and also is the central condition of political life. This, she claimed, means that all aspects of politics must take into account the myriad perspectives of the general public and allow for open discussion with the aim of reaching consensus because the firm support of the general public is necessary for *true* political power to manifest itself.¹⁹

With regard to the relationship between violence and power, Arendt asserts that "out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience [...] What can never grow out of it is power" (1969, n.p.). According to her formulation, liberal-democratic governments are powerful precisely because they have the support of the people, with whom they communicate and cooperate on an ongoing basis. It is the latter, she contends, that ensures the continuance of this power, as opposed to intimidating the public into supporting government.

Central to Arendt's conception of power is government-citizen communication, or the ability of governments and citizens to agree through uncoerced communication (Arendt, 1969; 1972; 1988). Her oft-cited statement that "power is actualized only where word and

¹⁸ However, Parsons acknowledges that coercion may be used in some situations in order to implement goals agreed to by the collective.

¹⁹ The behind-the-scenes machinations described by Bachrach and Baratz (1962; 1963) are for her to be equated with violence.

deed have not parted company” is evocative of this contention (Arendt, 1958, p.200). It suggests that power is not present unless communications are uncoerced and all citizens are fully aware of all issues at stake.

Habermas (1977; 1983) is critical of the distinction that Arendt draws between politics and violence. He argues that, while strategic contests for power do not *exclusively* create or maintain institutions in power, strategic action cannot be excluded from the political realm (1977). For Habermas (1981, p.285), strategic action consists of rational action undertaken with the intent of “influencing the decisions of a rational opponent.” Given that strategic action can prevent members of the public from becoming conscious of their interests, he claims that it has always been a constituent element of the acquisition and maintenance of power. To this end, Habermas asserts that those in power will always work to ensure their own interests are met first, while those whom they govern will always be of secondary concern. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that lasting power also requires the acquisition of some form of legitimacy through a set of common convictions established through what he calls communicative action. It occurs when those in power are interested not in achieving selfish goals, but in reaching mutual understanding with those they govern (Habermas, 1981). Indeed, loyalty to those in power is, according to Habermas’ (1984, p.346) formulation, created through “the prospect of making good on social-welfare programs, [...and] through excluding themes and contributions from public discussion.”

Habermas’ (1984) own notion of power may be seen as involving the production of public loyalty through positive and selective actions. Positive actions take place when, as described above, a government provides the public with social welfare programs. It is these actions, along with granting the public the freedom of belief and freedom to organize, that

establish the legitimacy of a government. Selective actions, on the other hand, are performed through the exclusion of the public from certain discussions and subjects.

Not all citizens have the ability to undertake these positive and selective actions. Although all are members of the public sphere, which Habermas (1984, p.319) characterizes as “communicative networks amplified by a cultural complex, a [...] mass media,” not all have access to the higher echelons of the public sphere. Those who have the power to take these positive and selective actions are, according to Habermas, members of a small segment of the public sphere called the political public sphere. Within this sphere members participate in the reproduction of political ideas which in turn help to perpetuate socio-political norms that allow the elite group to stay in power through communicative processes.

A common thread that emerges from the *power to* and *power over* perspectives is the importance of the resources utilized to create and maintain power. Communication through language is one important component, particularly in the mobilization of bias described by the *power over* perspective, and in the open government-citizen communication described in the *power over* perspective. To this end, this thesis will pursue an examination of the use of language by governments in order to maintain government power.

2.3: Conclusions and Research Question

The *power over* and *power to* perspectives discussed above outline two inter-related, yet contrasting, conceptions of how power relations are naturalized and perpetuated through language. Whereas the former centres on the exercise of power through government domination over citizens, the latter draws attention to communicative power that is oriented toward open discussion between government and citizens. Both *symbolic violence* as

described by Bourdieu and *disciplinary power* as described by Foucault involve the use of language and symbolism in the maintenance of government power. At issue here is “the establishment of relations of linguistic domination” that contributes to the ability of governments to maintain their positions of power (Bourdieu 1991, p.46).

The key assumption guiding the analysis and discussion presented in the remainder of the thesis is that government language is partially constitutive of the social structure of a society because the dominant structure of a society is “sustained less by the will of individuals than by the pervasiveness of particular constructions or versions of reality – often referred to as discourses” (Locke, 2004, p.1). As such, this thesis examines how particular linguistic and rhetorical techniques are used in government communication with citizens to foster public support for the government.

A key issue to emerge from the preceding discussion is that power manifests itself through language in the political domain. For example, governments often communicate with the public through the use of language that is vague, confusing, may have multiple meanings, or is designed to generate an automatic response.

The central research question to be addressed is: *How does the language used by the government of Canada in the environmental domain influence the maintenance of its political power?*

The following subquestions also are addressed:

1. Is any one linguistic or rhetorical phenomenon more frequently utilized in the environmental discourse of the Canadian government than others?
2. Do the linguistic and rhetorical techniques used in the environmental discourse of the Canadian government more clearly reflect the power to or power over perspective?

The discussion presented in the next chapter sets out the methodology used to empirically investigate the central research question and analyze the data obtained.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The discussion in this chapter sets out the methodology employed to analyze the linguistic and rhetorical techniques used across two mediums by the Canadian government during the period from August 2007 to December 2007 to communicate its environment-related initiatives to Canadian citizens. The specific media examined are nine speeches from the Prime Minister and two Cabinet Ministers, and 49 press releases.

3.1: Methods of Analysis

Content analysis is perhaps the most commonly used methodology in media and communication research that seeks to understand how language is employed to convey meaning (Berger, 2000). It typically involves the quantitative analysis of the frequency of use of specific linguistic strategies within a given set (or sets) of texts, and often is used to develop measurable data for comparative purposes (Krippendorff, 2004; Berger 2000).²⁰ For example, Bligh and Hess (2007) utilized content analysis to measure how specific linguistic and rhetorical devices employed by Alan Greenspan²¹ (including optimism, pessimism, and immediacy) reflected changing economic situations in the United States over a period of approximately five years between May 1999 and June 2004.

Given that the objective of this thesis is to examine the relationship between the linguistic and rhetorical techniques utilized by the Conservative government and its efforts to maintain power, content analysis is a particularly well-suited approach for the task at

²⁰ Despite ongoing debates about the exact definition of content analysis and the extent to which qualitative techniques can be included under this umbrella term (see for example Berg, 2007; Shapiro & Markoff, 1997), definitions typically emphasize the quantitative component of this methodology.

²¹ Alan Greenspan was the United States Federal Reserve Chairman from 1987 to 2006.

hand. It is used here for two key purposes. The first is to identify the frequency with which specific linguistic and rhetorical techniques are mobilized in support of power. The second is to analyze the data obtained in order to assess the ways in which power is manifested in the linguistic and rhetorical techniques employed by the government when communicating its environmental initiatives to the Canadian public.

The context within which linguistic and rhetorical techniques are employed in government communications to citizens also is an important component of understanding how language is used to foster and maintain government support. Therefore, elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA) also are employed in order to supplement the limitations of a purely quantitative analysis. More specifically, CDA offers a means to interpret and evaluate the components of government language employed in its environment-related discourse. CDA is a qualitative method of analysis that often is used to analyze manifestations of power in discourse and, more specifically, “the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of *power* and *dominance* in society” (van Dijk, 1998, n.p., emphasis in the original).²² As such, CDA is commonly used to provide socio-political critiques regarding the ways in which specific discourses function to influence particular groups of actors.²³

²² Qualitative approaches such as CDA grow out of the tradition of literary criticism in which text is subjectively analysed with the understanding that “implicit social standards and political judgments are apparent throughout [...] writings” (Hall, 2001, p.2). In this perspective, there is no fixed, objective ‘truth.’ The tradition of qualitative linguistic analysis is rooted in the aesthetic social analyses advanced by Plato and Aristotle, who strove to understand the role that aesthetic and linguistic components play in public life. Indeed, Donald Hall (2001, p.14) notes that Aristotle worked extensively to understand “the internal elements in literature that are most effective in eliciting an authorially desired and socially desirable response from the audience.” Such aims are closely tied to the goal of this thesis, which is to understand the components of government language that allow it to support the government’s ultimate goal of staying in power.

²³ Since CDA is based on the notion that power – understood here as *power over* – is enacted discursively, proponents of this approach to textual analysis argue that language can be used to maintain power through control over text and talk (van Dijk, 1998). The underlying assumption here is that those who have the power to speak in influential situations (e.g. socially dominant groups such as politicians, teachers and

For example, Kozinets (2008, p.865) uses critical discourse analysis to investigate “how technology ideologies influence consumer-level thought, speech, and action”. Cohen (2008, p. 271), on the other hand, uses CDA to examine the ways in which discourses are “used as political strategies aimed at demarcating the boundaries of the nation” among Israeli emigrants. Finally, Burchell and Cook (2006) adopted this approach to analyze the way in which discourse can shape public perception of corporate social responsibility initiatives through the selective interpretation of events.

Within the context of this thesis combining the quantitative dimensions of content analysis with the interpretive elements of CDA is deemed to be necessary in order to ensure that the nuanced content of the language analyzed is not overlooked in the process of measuring the frequencies of various linguistic and rhetorical configurations (Berg, 2007). The discussion in the next section outlines how the quantitative dimensions of content analysis and the qualitative features of CDA are applied in this thesis.

3.2: How content analysis and CDA are applied in the thesis

The decision to focus on the environment-related discourse of the Conservative government is rooted in Rude’s (1997, p.79) assertion that when it comes to environmental issues, the “government is increasingly perceived as the problem, not the solution”. To this end, the current government’s disdain for the Kyoto Accords has been well-publicized,²⁴ and Prime Minister Harper’s notable absence from a ceremony to honour the dozens of Canadian

professors) also have the ability to structure the understandings and expectations of less dominant groups. To this end, the epistemological foundations of CDA appear to echo the arguments put forth by Bourdieu (1991, 1990) and Foucault (1994, 180) regarding the role of language in naturalizing and perpetuating power relations.

²⁴ See, for example, “Kyoto Protocol FAQs,” 2007; “Conservative government,” 2004; “Will Kyoto die,” 2006; “Kyoto would,” 2007.

scientists who as members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with Al Gore for their contribution to the international climate change report did nothing to dispel his anti-environment reputation (“Science in Retreat,” 2008).²⁵ In the light of this situation, the government’s environmental discourse is seen to likely be a rich source of language used in support of power insofar as the Conservative government seemingly has a great deal of work to do if it is to succeed in convincing Canadians that it is serious about tackling global climate change and other environment-related concerns.

In order to address the question of how government language influences the maintenance of government power, nine speeches (see Table 3.1) and 49 press releases (see Appendix A) published by the Government of Canada on the topic of the environment in the period from August 2007 to December 2007 were analyzed. The aim was to collect all available speeches and press releases dealing with the environment released in this five month period in order to ensure that the contents of the texts across these two mediums would be, to the extent possible, comparable in terms of the issues addressed. The imbalance between the number of speeches and the number of press releases is a consequence of the availability of material, not from selective sampling on the part of the author.

²⁵ The IPCC was created by the United Nations to provide world leaders and decision-makers with an objective source of information on climate change. The IPCC is tasked with evaluating information regarding climate change from sources around the world, and providing information that is deemed to be objective and scientifically sound for the use of world leaders (IPCC, n.d.).

Table 3.1: Government Speeches Analyzed

Person	Speech Title	Date Given	Location
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve.	August 8, 2007	Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister's Statement at Closing Press Conference of SPP Meeting	August 21, 2007	Ottawa, Ontario
Stephen Harper	Notes for an Address by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada To the APEC Business Summit	September 7, 2007	Sydney, Australia
Stephen Harper	Statement by the Prime Minister at the Conclusion of the 2007 APEC Summit	September 9, 2007	Sydney, Australia
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Stephen Harper addresses the House of Commons in a reply to the Speech from the Throne	October 17, 2007	Ottawa, Ontario
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Harper Unveils New Environmental Initiative	October 25, 2007	Nipigon, Ontario
John Baird	Speech by the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment At the Economic Club of Toronto	December 5, 2007	Toronto, Ontario
Gary Lunn	Speech to Calgary Chamber of Commerce Luncheon	September 12, 2007	Calgary, Alberta
Gary Lunn	A Clean Energy Future for Canada	October 26, 2007	Waterloo, Ontario

Of the nine speeches analyzed, six were given by Prime Minister Harper, one by Minister of the Environment John Baird and two by the Minister of Natural Resources Gary Lunn. In terms of the speeches given by Prime Minister Harper, two were announcements of the designation of new parkland in Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories and Nipigon, Ontario, three addressed common environmental concerns facing a number of countries, and one was his response to the 2007 Speech from the Throne that addresses, in part, the environmental policies announced in the latter speech.²⁶ Minister Baird's speech focuses on

²⁶ Note that portions of this speech addressing issues other than the environment were not analyzed.

global warming and the actions taken by the government to address the issue. The speeches of Minister Lunn discuss the need for Canadians to consider the energy issues with which the country must contend, including a continued reliance on the use of resources that contribute to global warming. All of the speech transcripts were obtained through a subscription to the Prime Minister’s official mailing list and from the web sites of Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada.

The 49 press releases in the sample were collected from four government sources (see Table 3.2). While they all dealt with topics relating to the environment, the specific focus of the individual press releases ranged from announcements about the establishment of new parkland to information about the biofuels industry.

Table 3.2: Press Release Sources

Source	URL	Number of Press Releases
Office of the Prime Minister mailing-list	http://pm.gc.ca/eng/default.asp	5
Environment Canada	http://www.ec.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=FD9B0E51-1	2
Natural Resources Canada	http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/com/index-eng.php	1
EcoAction ²⁷	http://www.ecoaction.gc.ca/index-eng.cfm	41

The departure point for the analysis presented below is Edelman’s (1967) taxonomy of language types commonly found in government communications (see Table 3.3).²⁸ The objective is to identify the extent to which the linguistic and rhetorical techniques set out in

²⁷ EcoAction is a government of Canada web-site that publishes environment-related press releases issued across federal government departments and agencies.

²⁸ Although this taxonomy is nearly 45 years old, it has been used in a number of recent studies examining the use of language by political and administrative officials. See, for example, Horiuchi (2007), Hart, Jarvis, Jennings & Smith-Howell (2005), Burnier (2005), and Rose (2000).

his taxonomy manifest themselves in the government's environmental discourse targeting the Canadian public.

Table 3.3: Edelman's (1967) Taxonomy of Language Types

Language Type	Indicators
<i>Hortatory</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• attempts to persuade the public to support government policies• explicit and/or implicit use of inferences, premises, and conclusions• appeals for public support• promises or threats• the use of vague words that can be interpreted in different ways
<i>Legal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• references to constitutions, statutes, bills, contracts, treaties and judicial decisions• use of legal terminology that will not be easily understood by the general public
<i>Administrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• giving of instructions• typically used by appointed rather than elected officials• often opaque to those outside the organization
<i>Bargaining</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a deal is offered, but usually in private• governments present the bargaining to the public as an attempt to protect the public interest

The advantage of this taxonomy in terms of undertaking a content analysis is that it identifies the language types and the corresponding linguistic and rhetorical techniques that government representatives may use to communicate with the public.²⁹ As such, it offers a well established foundation for empirically investigating the relationship between language and government power.

In conducting the content analysis, the speeches and press releases were analyzed by hand.³⁰ The process that was used is as follows. First, the speeches and press releases were

²⁹ According to Edelman (1967), these strategies enable governments to act with relative freedom in many policy domains because they may serve to limit public participation in these arenas.

³⁰ Although there has been a proliferation of content analysis software in recent years (e.g. General Inquirer, HAMLET, CATPAC, Diction), hand coding is a technique that continues to be used in much contemporary

read through several times in order to familiarize the author with their contents. Next, using the characteristics of each of the language types specified in Edelman's (1967) taxonomy (see Table 3.1) as a reference, the author read through each of the documents again, colour-coding the manifestations of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques that correspond with each of Edelman's four language types as they appeared in the texts. This process was repeated several times so as to ensure that all of the manifestations of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques corresponding with each of Edelman's four language types were identified. The frequencies of use of each of the four language types were then tabulated in order to allow for comparisons within and cross the two mediums being examined. Once the quantitative dimensions of the content analysis was completed, a critical discourse analysis oriented toward interpreting the function of the specific linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified in the speeches and press releases was undertaken.

Due to the fact that the materials were analysed by hand by a single coder, the results cannot be considered statistically reliable in the sense that they are based on subjective interpretation and, as such, may not necessarily be replicated by another researcher. Nonetheless, given that the goal of the thesis is to identify the language used by government, and the context within which it functions. The emphasis on the qualitative component of the analysis "[provides] ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes" within the data (Berkowitz, 1997, n.p.). As for the word counts identified through the quantitative component of the research, they simply represent frequency counts of the use of certain language types by government officials.

research. See for example, Smith, (2008), Seyranian, Atuel & Crano, (2008), Seyranian & Bligh, (2008), Vazquez & Liston-Heyes, (2008). It also should be noted that, while hand coding typically involves more than one coder for this thesis it only was the author who did the coding.

The discussion in the next chapter focuses on the use of hortatory or persuasive language in environment-related speeches and press releases. This is followed by an analysis of the ways in which legal language is used in these mediums. In section 4.3 the use of administrative language within these mediums is addressed. An examination of how bargaining language manifests itself in the speeches and press releases is the focus of discussion in section 4.4.

Chapter 4: Analyzing Government Language

The results of the analysis conducted on the linguistic and rhetorical techniques used by the Canadian government in speeches and press releases on the topic of the environment are presented in this chapter. To this end, the use of hortatory, legal, administrative, and bargaining language in the materials analyzed is examined utilizing Edelman's (1967) typology.

4.1: Hortatory Language

In this section, the use of hortatory language (here indicated by vague language and metaphors) in the environmental discourse of the current Canadian government is discussed with reference to Edelman's (1967) typology.

4.1.1: *The Use of Vague Language*

Edelman (1967) argues that vague words are characterized by their ability to be interpreted in a wide range of ways by different interest groups. He further suggests that such words are politically expedient due to their ability to appease large numbers of people while providing little in the way of specific information.³¹ Edelman (1967) notes that words and phrases including 'public interest,' and 'unfair' are typical of the vague language found in political communication. Orwell (2006), on the other hand, claims that typical vague words include 'democracy,' 'socialism,' and 'freedom.' While these words clearly are related to political notions, it may be argued that the subject of the environment entails a somewhat different type of vague language. This is related, in part, to the fact that much of the

³¹ Orwell (2006) also identifies vague words as an important tool in political speech on the grounds that they may be interpreted in a variety of ways in accordance with the diverse perspectives of different actors.

controversy surrounding environmental issues in Canada has stemmed from the type of action that should (or should not) be taken to protect the environment. As such, a number of vague words identified in the materials analyzed were action-oriented. Although these words were, as a result, slightly different from those emphasized by Orwell and Edelman, it seems plausible that these action-oriented words may be viewed as vague words insofar as they can be interpreted in a number of different ways.

The ten most frequently identified vague terms in the speeches analyzed are listed below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Vague words in speeches

Vague word	No. of times used	No. of speeches using word
challenge	23	7
balance	16	6
important	12	5
real	9	5
strong/strongly/strongest	8	5
realistic	3	3
serious/seriously	2	2
tough	2	2
fair	1	1
vigorously	1	1

As the information in Table 4.1 illustrates, ‘challenge’ was the most frequently identified vague word in the speeches analyzed. This word appears to serve a hortatory function insofar as it helped the speaker make explicit and/or implicit uses of inferences, premises, and conclusions. It also can be interpreted in different ways. This word was used most frequently in relation to the issue of climate change and/or global warming (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Use of ‘challenge’ in speeches

Person	Speech Title	Date Given	No. times ‘challenge’ used
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve	Aug 8, 2007	1
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister’s Statement at Closing Press Conference of SPP Meeting	Aug 21, 2007	2
Stephen Harper	Notes for an Address by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada To the APEC Business Summit	Sept 7, 2007	3
Stephen Harper	Statement by the Prime Minister at the Conclusion of the 2007 APEC Summit	Sept 9, 2007	1
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Harper addresses the House of Commons in a reply to the Speech from the Throne	Oct 17, 2007	0
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Harper Unveils New Environmental Initiative: PM Announces Creation of Marine Conservation Area in Lake Superior	Oct 25, 2007	0
John Baird	Speech by the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment At the Economic Club of Toronto	Dec 5, 2007	5
Gary Lunn	Speech to Calgary Chamber of Commerce luncheon	Sept 12, 2007	2
Garry Lunn	A Clean Energy Future for Canada	Oct 26, 2007	10
TOTAL			23

At the APEC conference in August 2007, Prime Minister Harper stated that “[t]he singular success of this year’s APEC Summit was to advance international cooperation on the *challenge* of climate change” [*Emphasis added*] (Harper, 2007, September 9). A few weeks earlier he made a similar statement at the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) Meeting in Montebello, Quebec, noting that he had met with Mexican President Calderón and U.S. President Bush, and that the three leaders had “agreed on the need for practical solutions to our mutual environmental *challenges*” [*Emphasis added*] (Harper, 2007,

August 21).³² Indeed, within the Prime Minister's speeches there was only one instance within which the word 'challenge' was not used *exclusively* in reference to climate change or to global warming. It also was in comments he made at the SPP Summit. Specifically, he describes the Summit as an opportunity to "take stock of the **challenges** we face together" [*Emphasis added*] (Harper, 2007, August 21,) and goes on to list 'challenges' extending beyond environmental issues with which Canada and the participant countries must contend— e.g. consumer protection, the safety of imported goods, the development of clean energy sources, and border security.

In Minister Baird's December 2007 speech to the Economic Club of Toronto he used the word 'challenge' five times in relation to greenhouse gases and global warming. In this particular speech, for example, he said that it is "the **challenge** of our generation to get them [greenhouse gases] to go down" [*Emphasis added*] (Baird, 2007, December 5). Later in the speech he notes that Canada contributes only a relatively small amount of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere in comparison to some nations, but that "we've got to do our part to beat this **challenge**" [*Emphasis added*] (Baird, 2007, December 5).

Minister Lunn also used the word 'challenge' in relation to global warming in his two speeches that were included in the sample. In total, he used this word twelve times. For example, in his September 2007 speech, he noted that when it comes to fighting global warming, "[t]he **challenge** for us as a government, is to ensure that when we move forward, we do it in a balanced way that will allow for economic growth" [*Emphasis added*] (Lunn, 2007, September 12). One month later in his speech to the Centre for International Governance Innovation, he noted that developing environmentally friendly energy sources

³² The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) was founded in 2005 "as a trilateral effort to increase security and enhance prosperity among the United States, Canada and Mexico through greater cooperation and information sharing" (SPP, n.d.).

to decrease greenhouse gas emissions “is an enormous *challenge*” [*Emphasis added*] and went on to claim that “Canada is an emerging energy super power and [...] we can play an important role in facing many of these *challenges*” [*Emphasis added*] (Lunn, 2007, October 26).

Given the criticism about the Conservative Party as taking a soft stance on environmental issues and for rejecting the Kyoto Protocol, it seems plausible that the use of the word ‘challenge’ in relation to global warming may be an attempt to downplay the negative connotations associated with this environmental phenomenon. For example, another word that could fit into the speeches in the place of ‘challenge’ is ‘problem’. However, ‘problem’ carries more negative connotations than ‘challenge’ insofar as the two words have slightly different meanings (see Table 4.3).³³

Table 4.3: ‘Challenge’ vs. ‘Problem’

Challenge	Problem
1. a summons to a duel	1. a question raised for consideration or solution
2. an invitation to compete in a sport	2. an intricate unsettled question
3. a calling into question	3. a source of perplexity or vexation
4. an exception taken to a juror	
5. a sentry’s command to halt and prove identity	
6. a stimulating or interesting task or problem	

(Source: Mish, 1989)

While ‘challenge’ suggests a stimulating task or sport, the word ‘problem’ is most frequently associated with vexation, perplexity, and complexity. Moreover, the notion of a problem usually implies something unsettled that needs to be resolved. Given the nuanced difference in meaning of the two words, it may be argued that framing global warming as a

³³ The word ‘problem’ was used twice to refer to global warming in Minister Baird’s December 2007 speech. In it he notes that if Canada closes its steel companies and China produces more to compensate, “we won’t have solved the problem. We won’t have addressed the problem” (Baird, 2007, December 5). This marks the only instance of the use of ‘problem’ in relation to global warming in the materials analyzed.

‘challenge’ instead of as a ‘problem’ downplays the complexity – and possibly the urgency – of tackling of this environmental phenomenon. Viewed from this perspective, the fact that the government has ignored Canada’s Kyoto commitments and set much less stringent greenhouse gas reduction targets (“Envoys take overnight break,” 2007, n.p.) potentially becomes a less alarming proposition than if global warming is framed as a problem.

The second most frequently identified vague term in the speeches analyzed was the word ‘balance’. It was identified in six of the nine speeches and was used a total of 17 times across seven speeches (see Table 4.4). In almost all instances it was used when describing the relationship between the environment and the economy.³⁴ The vagueness of the word ‘balance’ relates to the fact that it requires people to make inferences in accordance with how the term is used within a particular context. As such, it may be interpreted in different ways by different actors.

Table 4.4: The use of ‘balance’ in speeches

Person	Speech Title	Date Given	No. times ‘balance’ used
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park	Aug 8, 2007	1
Stephen Harper	Notes for an Address by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada To the APEC Business Summit	Sept 7, 2007	6
Stephen Harper	Statement by the Prime Minister at the Conclusion of the 2007 APEC Summit	Sept 9, 2007	1
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Harper Unveils New Environmental Initiative	Oct 25, 2007	1
John Baird	Speech by the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment At the Economic Club of Toronto	Dec 5, 2007	1

³⁴ The exception was in Minister Lunn’s October 2007 speech. Here, rather than just referring to the environment and the economy, ‘balance’ was used in reference to the environment, the economy, and energy.

Gary Lunn	Speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce luncheon	Sept 12, 2007	4
Gary Lunn	A Clean Energy Future for Canada	Oct 26, 2007	3
TOTAL			17

The September 2007 speech given by Stephen Harper at the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) Business Summit is characteristic of how ‘balance’ was most frequently used in the speeches analyzed. In this specific speech, he used the word – or a variation thereof – four times in three sentences to connect environmental and economic concerns:

[...] as we all increasingly understand, economic growth and prosperity have to be *balanced* with careful environmental stewardship. When I say that we must *balance* environmental protection and economic prosperity, I do so quite deliberately. The word ‘*balance*’ does not mean that we fail to take the environment seriously. On the contrary, unless we face the need to strike that *balance*, the environment will never be given the priority that it should [*Emphasis added*] (Harper, 2007, September 7).

One month later, in October 2007, in a speech announcing the creation of a marine conservation area in Lake Superior he again connected environmental concerns to their economic counterparts suggesting that “[n]ational marine conservation areas *balance* environmental protection with responsible economic activity” [*Emphasis added*] (Harper, 2007, October 25).

The use of the word ‘balance’ with reference to environmental and economic issues also was present in the speech given by Minister Baird and in each of the two speeches given by Minister Lunn. In a speech given to the Economic Club of Toronto in December 2007, for instance, Minister Baird relied on the word ‘balance’ to connect the sustainability of the environment with the well-being of the economy. In this particular speech he asserted that any plan for the environment “must be long term and it must be flexible and it

must have a *balanced* approach that preserves economic growth and protects the environment” [*Emphasis added*] (Baird, 2007, December 5).

Likewise, in a speech given to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce in September 2007, Minister Lunn stated that “the challenge for us as a government, is to ensure that when we move forward, we do it in a *balanced* way that still allows economic growth, while making gains on reducing greenhouse gases and pollution” [*Emphasis added*] (Lunn, 2007, September 12). In an October 2007 speech, he uses the word twice in two sentences within the context of a discussion in which he was emphasizing that Canada must ensure that environmental action does not interfere with economic prosperity:

‘Canada’s practical, *balanced* plan ensures that we make real progress on tackling this common challenge.’ We need a *balanced* approach [*Emphasis added*] (Lunn, 2007, October 26).

The manner in which the word ‘balance’ is used in the above examples – and the other speeches in which it was identified – to establish a connection between the environment and the economy is particularly noteworthy. It provides a rhetorical solution to the tension between environmental sustainability and economic well-being insofar as ‘balance’ lends an air of precision to an issue that is not measurable. In so doing, it may be argued that the use of the word ‘balance’ in this way creates an image of “a process that is simultaneously precise and fair” without offering a mechanism for weighing the competing issues (Patterson and Lee, 1997, p.35).

Consequently it may be argued that using the word ‘balance’ in this manner enables government representatives to claim that the government is making fair objective decisions based on all available information when, in reality, there is no measure for doing so

because environmental and economic values are largely unquantifiable.³⁵ At issue here is the fact that, “hydroelectricity, irrigation water, wildlife habitat, and recreation do not have weights” that can be measured because evaluating the importance of the environment is a largely subjective matter (Patterson & Lee, 1997, p.30). It follows, therefore, that the use of the word balance within the speeches analyzed may be seen as means of constructing ‘fairness’ rhetorically on the basis of subjective judgments of governmental and administrative officials.³⁶

The ten most frequently identified vague terms in the 49 press releases that were analyzed are listed, in descending order, in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Vague words in press releases

Vague word	No. of times used	No. of press releases using word
health	37	18
real	18	12
challenge	12	10
balance	12	10
important/importance	10	8
strong/strengthening	6	6
serious/seriously	5	5
tough/toughest	4	3
world-class	2	2
appropriate	2	2

³⁵ The image of fairness is created through the manner in which the word ‘balance’ simultaneously suggests a precise and objective scale, while also suggesting equity – a central democratic value (Patterson and Lee, 1997). Combined, these two implied meanings create an image of precision and equity.

³⁶ Another aspect of the use of the word ‘balance’ in connecting the economy with the environment is the implicit suggestion that government communication has been regulated across the three departments of the federal government analyzed, as the Prime Minister and two Ministers appear to use the word in the same way insofar as all three politicians use it to connect the economy with the environment.

As the information in Table 4.5 illustrates, ‘health’ was the most frequently identified vague word in the environment-related press releases. The analysis found that this word was used 37 times across 18 of the 49 press releases and that it was used most frequently in relation to the interconnectedness between human health and the health of the environment. Of the 37 uses of the word ‘health’ identified, 20 of these instances were in reference to the health of the Canadian public (see Table 4.6). In the remaining 17 instances, the word was used in a context that did not refer to the Canadian public (e.g. ‘Health Canada’; ‘the health of the oceans’). The word ‘health’ appears to serve a hortatory function because it helped the speaker make explicit and/or implicit uses of inferences, premises, and conclusions. Moreover, it can be interpreted in different ways.

Table 4.6: The use of ‘health’ in press releases

Source of Press Release	Title of Press Release	Date	No. of times ‘health/public health’ used
Prime Minister’s Office	Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Visit Australia and Participate in the APEC Leaders’ Summit	Aug 27, 2007	1
EcoAction	The Government of Canada Announces Further Progress Under the Chemicals Management Plan	Aug 24, 2007	4
EcoAction	\$500M Fund Launched to Support Next-Generation Renewable Fuels	Sept 12, 2007	1
EcoAction	Unique Community a Model for a Greener, Healthier Canada	Sept 13, 2007	1
EcoAction	Canada Calls for Accelerated Phase-Out of Ozone Depleting Substances	Sept 14, 2007	2
EcoAction	Saskatchewan producers take steps to improve environment	Sept 20, 2007	2
EcoAction	Biofuels, Organic Sectors in P.E.I. to Benefit from New Government Funding	Sept 28, 2007	1
EcoAction	ecoAUTO Rebate Program Application Form Now Available	Oct 1, 2007	1

Table 4.6: The use of 'health' in press releases, cont'd

Source of Press Release	Title of Press Release	Date	No. of times 'health/public health' used
EcoAction	Canada's New Government takes action to improve the health of our oceans	Oct 5, 2007	3
EcoAction	SDTC Portfolio Reaches \$1 Billion in Cleantech Funding - \$30.3 million in new funding approved for 14 companies	Oct 25, 2007	2
EcoAction	Government of Canada Taking Action to Protect the Health of the Gulf of Maine	Nov 8, 2007	1
EcoAction	Government of Canada Invests in Clean Solar Energy	Nov 19, 2007	1
EcoAction	One year after launch, Canada's Chemicals Management Plan is on track and delivering results	Nov 20, 2007	8
EcoAction	UN Ranks Canada in Top 5 Best Places to Live – Canada Continues to Deliver Leadership on Climate Change	Nov 27, 2007	1
EcoAction	Government of Canada Calls on Industry to Participate in New Biofuels Initiative	Dec 3, 2007	1
EcoAction	Baird and Eminent Advisors to Chart Canada's Course at UN Climate Change Conference	Dec 3, 2007	1
EcoAction	List of 2008 Model Year Vehicles Eligible for the ecoAUTO Rebate Program	Dec 7, 2007	2
EcoAction	Canada Leading by Example: Baird Announces New Funding for Adaptation on Climate Change	Dec 10, 2007	4
	TOTAL		37

Although Edelman (1967) argues that references to ‘health and safety’³⁷ generally are used as cues to quell the worries of an anxious public while remaining vague, the references to the health of the Canadian public identified in the press releases did not support this assertion. Instead, the uses of the word ‘health’ within the sample of press releases tended to be linked to discussions to government programs. Moreover, it appeared to be predominantly used in a manner suggesting that policies that help the environment also contribute to preserving the health of Canadians.

For example, in a press release published by EcoAction in August of 2007 focusing on the regulation of harmful chemicals under the government’s Chemicals Management Plan,³⁸ Minister Baird is quoted as saying that “[p]rotecting and preserving our environment comes hand in hand with protecting the *health and safety* of Canadians” [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, August 24). Prior to this statement, the contents of the press release had indicated that the goals of the Chemicals Management Plan were to ensure the regulation and control of dangerous substances used by industry. Given this context, the connection between the control of dangerous chemicals and the health and safety of Canadians is logically demonstrable to those reading the press releases.

In a September 2007 EcoAction press release dealing with a government call for the international community to strive for a faster phasing out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC’s), Minister Baird is quoted as stating that “[t]he *health of Canadians* demands we take action” on eliminating HCFCs [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, September 14).

³⁷ Edelman (1967) claims that the use of the phrase ‘national health and safety’ is linked to the fact that it enables different groups to ascribe their own respective meanings to the phrase and its variations. As such, he identifies the use of such a vague phrase within a political context as a technique aimed at placating concerned members of the public. While no exact matches to Edelman’s phrase ‘national health and safety’ were identified within the sample, similar words/phrases with similar meanings were identified.

³⁸ The Chemicals Management Plan is designed to ensure the safe management and appropriate use of harmful chemicals. See, Government of Canada (2007).

Again, this reference to the health of the public does not seem to fit with Edelman's (1967) argument that references to public health are meant to be placating in a vague manner. Rather than being vague, this press release includes an explanation as to why the phasing out of HCFC's is important to the health of Canadians. Specifically, it is noted that the elimination of HCFC's will "allow us to simultaneously address two of the most critical issues facing our planet today – ozone preservation and climate change" (EcoAction, 2007, September 14). As with the above reference to the reduction of dangerous chemicals, within this particular press release, at least, a logical connection is made between the preservation of the ozone layer, the prevention of climate change, and the health of Canadians.³⁹

The following month, in an EcoAction press release announcing the government's ecoAUTO Rebate Program,⁴⁰ a statement noted that the program is aimed at "improving the *health of Canadians* and the environment by reducing the environmental impacts of transportation" [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, October 1). In a fourth EcoAction press release published in November 2007 announcing \$1.1 million in funding for demonstration projects using solar power, Minister Lunn is quoted as stating that the use of clean solar energy is part of the government's plan to "protect the *health of Canadians* and

³⁹ The danger posed to the ozone layer by HCFC's was first identified in 1974. Numerous studies conducted since that date have confirmed the connection between HCFC's and ozone depletion as well as identifying the growing hole in the ozone layer (Sparling, 2001). Furthermore, the depletion of the ozone layer has been linked to an increased incidence of skin cancer for several years, leading to warnings to the public issued by groups such as the World Health Organization regarding unprotected sun exposure (see for example "Children at Risk," 2003, "Arctic Ozone Hole," 2005; Brown, 2005, Slaper, Guus, Daniel, de Guijl & van der Leun, 1996).

⁴⁰ The ecoAUTO Rebate Program was launched in March of 2007. Under the program, Canadians who purchase vehicles with high fuel mileage are eligible for a rebate provided that their vehicle is included on a government list of eligible vehicles (Transport Canada, 2007). The program came under widespread criticism for what some called arbitrary decision-making regarding which vehicle models were eligible (Leblanc, 2008; "Honda matches federal rebate," 2007; Parkinson, 2008). In the government's 2008 budget, it was announced that the ecoAUTO program will be allowed to expire in 2009 (Parkinson, 2008; Leblanc, 2008).

our environment” [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, November 19). The health dangers caused by air pollution are well-established,⁴¹ so there is a logical connection made within the press releases that the reduction of air pollution will improve the health of Canadians.

The examples provided above are representative of the manner in which references to the health of the Canadian public are used in the press releases analyzed. In each of the 20 instances in which the word ‘health’ was used to refer to the Canadian public, the context of the press release indicated a specific action being taken by the government to protect the health of the public. Therefore, the evidence obtained from the content analysis does not appear to support Edelman’s (1964) claim that government references to public health are usually used in a vague manner to placate the public without taking specific action.

However, this finding may be a function of the medium in which the word ‘health’ was used. Press releases are not targeted directly at the general public. Instead, they usually are aimed at journalists who, in turn, utilize the information from the press releases to inform newspaper articles and/or stories on the nightly news. Therefore, attempts at placating the public with vague language could come under fire from journalists who could, in turn, critique the government for being vague. This would seem to imply that, strategically, it may be in the best interests of the government to use relatively straightforward language in their environment-related press releases.

The second most frequently identified vague term in the press releases was the word ‘real’. It was identified 18 times in 12 of the 49 press releases analyzed (see Table 4.7). The context within which this word was used in the press releases suggests a tendency employ the word ‘real’ as a means to amplify the perceived importance of specific statements.

⁴¹ See for example Health Canada, 2006; World Health Organization, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2004.

Table 4.7: The use of ‘real’ in press releases

Source of Press Release	Title of Press Release	Date issued	No. of times ‘real’ used
Prime Minister’s Office	Prime Minister Harper Urges APEC to seek a New Consensus on Climate Change Based on Canada’s Balanced Approach	September 7, 2007	2
Environment Canada	Canada Calls New UN Agreement an Important First Step	December 15, 2007	1
EcoAction	Energy Ministers’ Conference: Collaborating on Canada’s Energy Future	September 25, 2007	3
EcoAction	Government of Canada Taking Action to Protect the Health of the Gulf of Maine	November 8, 2007	1
EcoAction	One year after launch, Canada’s Chemicals Management Plan is on track and delivering results	November 20, 2007	1
EcoAction	Government of Canada Takes Landmark Action to Conserve Canada’s North	November 21, 2007	1
EcoAction	Renewable Fuels Bill Clears the Way for Renewable Fuel Content	December 3, 2007	2
EcoAction	Government of Canada Calls on Industry to Participate in New Biofuels Initiative	December 3, 2007	1
EcoAction	Canada Takes Action to Help Developing Countries Fight Climate Change	December 10, 2007	1
EcoAction	Canada Supports UN Principles for New Climate Change Deal	December 10, 2007	1
EcoAction	Canada Leading by Example: Baird Announces New Funding for Adaptation on Climate Change	December 10, 2007	1
EcoAction	Government of Canada Gets Tough on Climate Change: Orders Industry to Submit Air Emissions Information	December 12, 2007	3
TOTAL			18

For example, in the press release issued by the Prime Minister’s Office from the 2007 APEC Summit in Australia, Prime Minister Harper is quoted as saying that he hopes “that

this Summit will help lay the groundwork for a new post-2012 international protocol, a fair and flexible new regime that will accommodate all countries and lead to *real*, effective action against global warming” [*Emphasis added*] (Prime Minister’s Office, 2007, September 7). If the word ‘real’ is removed from the latter statement, the statement’s meaning does not change. As such, it may be argued that the primary purpose for using the word ‘real’ appears to be to amplify the phrase “effective action.” Its presence in the above statement emphasizes that the government is working toward a new agreement that is genuinely aimed at combating global warming and, hopefully, will deliver tangible results. Moreover, the implication that the government is aiming to make measurable progress in fighting global warming appears to be part of its ongoing critique of the Kyoto Protocol (see Ambrose, 2006; Baird, 2007, December 5).

The word ‘real’ was consistently used as an amplifier in the press releases surveyed. Evidence of this can be seen in a September 2007 press release issued by EcoAction, in which Minister Lunn is quoted as stating that “we are ready to achieve *real* results for our environment, our economy and our energy security” [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, September 25). In two press releases published by EcoAction in November 2007 the use of the word ‘real’ as an amplifier also is evident. In the first instance, Greg Thompson, Minister of Veterans Affairs, is quoted as stating that “our Government is taking *real* action” to protect Canada’s ocean resources [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, November 8b). In the second, Tony Clement, Minister of Health, is quoted as stating that the Conservatives’ Chemicals Management Plan “means *real* accountability for Canadians when it comes to protecting their health and environment” [*Emphasis added*] (EcoAction, 2007, November 20). In each of these instances the meaning of the sentence is not fundamentally altered by the presence of the word ‘real.’ Instead, its presence serves to

suggest that the outcomes of the government's actions will perhaps be more tangible than that of its predecessor. What is particularly noteworthy, however, is that the way in which these actions will be manifested remains vague.

Overall, the manner in which vague language was used in the speeches and press releases suggests that the use of words such as 'balance,' 'challenge,' 'health,' and 'real' serves to foster positive perceptions of the environmental initiatives being pursued by the government. Whereas the way in which the word 'balance' was employed in the speeches analyzed appeared to be oriented toward fostering notions of precision and objectivity vis-à-vis government decisions pertaining to the economy and the environment, the word 'challenge' seemed to be used to downplay the negative connotations associated with the notion of global warming.

In the press releases, the use of these two words was notably less frequent than in the speeches. For this medium, the two most frequently identified vague words were 'health' and 'real.' The former, although identified by Edelman (1967) as a vague term, was generally found to be employed within the context of announcing particular government policies, with specific health benefits for the general public being clearly set out. The way in which the word 'real' was employed appeared to be as a vague term that lends an air of tangibility to initiatives (and policies) that do not specify *a priori* tangible outcomes or results.

On the basis of these findings it may be argued that the use of vague language in the speeches and press releases appears to function as a means of suggesting tangibility or precision where there is none (as with the use of 'real' and 'balance'), or to put an issue in a more positive light (as with the use of 'challenge'). The exception is the word 'health'.

While it is a vague term, it was most frequently used to draw a connection between the well-being of the environment and the well-being of the Canadian public.

4.1.2: The Use of Metaphors

Another dimension of hortatory language that was identified in the environment-related speeches and press releases was the use of metaphors to simplify and give “meaning to complex and bewildering sets of observations that evoke concern” (Edelman, 1971, p. 65). The messages conveyed by metaphors are significant because as Edelman (1971, p. 68) asserts, “[c]ommonly accepted assumptions about political reality and political cause and effect often consist of simplified or distorted perspectives embodied in metaphors.” Within the context of the government’s environmental discourse metaphors appear to serve an important function insofar as they can establish “the pattern of perception to which people respond” (Edelman, 1967, p.67). Put simply, metaphors can be used in a manner that may influence the way in which members of the public perceive certain policy initiatives and issues.

Within the nine speeches analysed a total of 32 metaphors were identified (see Table 4.8). These metaphors were present in five of the nine speeches analyzed and breakdown as follows:

- Prime Minister Harper – 12 metaphors in five speeches;
- Minister Baird – 11 metaphors in one speech; and
- Minister Lunn – 10 metaphors in two speeches

Minister Baird’s December 2007 speech at the Economic Club of Toronto, and Minister Lunn’s two speeches included metaphors that were used repeatedly. For the remaining

speeches there was no repetition of metaphors. Only two speeches used common metaphors – Prime Minister Harper’s August 2007 speech announcing the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve and his October 2007 speech announcing the creation of a marine conservation area in Lake Superior. Each of the latter speeches used the metaphor ‘ecological and cultural treasures’ or ‘ecological treasures’ a combined total of three times.

Table 4.8: Metaphors used in speeches

Person	Speech Title	Date Given	Metaphors	Frequency of use
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve	Aug 8, 2007	• vast storehouse	1
			• Virginia Falls as the crown jewel of the park	1
			• ecological and cultural treasures	1
			• the region’s ecological treasures	1
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister’s Statement at Closing Press Conference of SPP Meeting	Aug 21, 2007	• International relations are rooted in common commitments	1
Stephen Harper	Notes for an Address by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada To the APEC Business Summit	Sept 7, 2007	• a recipe for failure	1
			• a patchwork of programs	1
			• harness the elements	1
			• world stage	1
Stephen Harper	Statement by the Prime Minister at the Conclusion of the 2007 APEC Summit	Sept 9, 2007	• Bedrock principle	1
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Stephen Harper addresses the House of Commons in a reply to the Speech from the Throne	Oct 17, 2007	<i>No metaphors identified</i>	0
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Harper Unveils New Environmental Initiative	Oct 25, 2007	• natural and man-made treasures	1
			• ecological and cultural treasures	1

Table 4.8: Metaphors used in speeches, cont'd

Person	Speech Title	Date Given	Metaphors	Frequency of use
John Baird	Speech by the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment At the Economic Club of Toronto	Dec 5, 2007	• Kyoto Protocol as a marathon	2
			• greenhouse gases will skyrocket	1
			• everyone must be aboard/on board	4
			• everyone rowing together	2
			• building blocks for a future agreement	1
			• the planet cannot be let down	1
Gary Lunn	Speech to Calgary Chamber of Commerce luncheon	Sept 12, 2007	• hand in hand	1
			• call a spade a spade	1
			• energy is the anchor to our economy	2
			• on these fronts	2
Gary Lunn	A Clean Energy Future for Canada	Oct 26, 2007	• play a role	2
			• cornerstone of our economy	1
			• Canada can leave its mark	1
TOTAL				33

While some metaphors identified appeared to function simply as figures of speech that did not appear to convey any deeper meaning, others conveyed implicit meanings that appeared to communicate a deeper meaning regarding the topics being discussed (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Metaphors in Speeches with a Deeper Implied Meaning

Metaphor	Number of times used	Number of speeches
storehouse	1	1
treasures	4	2
crown jewel	1	1
marathon	1	1
everyone aboard	4	1
everyone rowing together	2	1
hand in hand	1	1
anchor to the economy	2	1
patchwork	1	1
call a spade a spade	1	1

In Prime Minister Harper’s speech announcing the designation of new parkland at Nahanni National Park Reserve in August 2007, he describes the parkland with as “a vast storehouse of energy and mineral riches” (Harper, 2007, August 8). According to Mish (1988), the word ‘storehouse’ can have two distinct meanings. The first is a building for storing goods or supplies. The second is an abundant source or supply. While Prime Minister Harper employs a metaphor to state that the park was established in order to “[preserve] the region’s ecological treasures,” his use of the ‘storehouse’ metaphor in combination with the latter metaphor may be interpreted as being indicative of a desire on the part of the government of Canada to harvest the valuable natural resources within the park because the ‘storehouse’ metaphor positions the park as a storage space for goods or commodities.

Much of the discussion in the Nahanni speech centres on protecting the land from further development, and ensuring “long-term protection of this wilderness” (Harper, 2007, August 8). However, in spite of this, Prime Minister Harper also acknowledges that there

are commercial interests that have already invested in the land, and that this investment “must be recognized and respected” (Harper, 2007, August 8). The fact that there are commercial interests involved in the park appears to be at odds with the Prime Minister’s emphasis on the protection of the park given that such interests can potentially be involved in activities that threaten the natural ecosystem of the park. Here again, the use of the ‘storehouse’ metaphor serves to reinforce the claim that Prime Minister Harper views the park as a storage space of goods or commodities.

Moreover, the reference to the park as containing ecological ‘treasures’ further implies a valuing of the economic potential of the park. While the term ‘treasure’ can refer to something that is cherished and loved, it also can indicate something worth a great deal of money, such as jewels or precious metals. When combined with the implied meaning of the ‘storehouse’ metaphor, it may be argued that the economic component of the ‘treasure’ metaphor is perhaps more strongly inferred than its emotional counterpart.

Later in the same speech Prime Minister Harper describes one of the park’s waterfalls as “the crown jewel of the park” (Harper, 2007, August 8). Much like the ‘treasure’ metaphor, the phrase ‘crown jewel’ can be understood as denoting something that is the most attractive of its kind and/or something that is the most *valuable* of its kind. While it may be that the use of this phrase within the speech was intended solely to connote notions of beauty, it may be argued that it is the latter, value-based or economic connotations, which take precedent given that it is the economic component of the park’s value that is emphasized through the ‘storehouse’ and ‘treasure’ metaphors.

In his October 2007 speech announcing the creation of a marine conservation area in Lake Superior the Prime Minister uses the ‘treasure’ metaphor twice. In each instance he describes the marine conservation area as containing “ecological and cultural treasures”.

The context within which he uses the ‘treasure’ metaphor within this speech, however, is slightly different from the manner in which this metaphor was used in the August 2007 speech discussed above. In this case, the ‘treasure’ metaphor is not linked to other metaphors such as the ‘crown jewel’ and ‘storehouse’ that suggest the presence of economic interests. Instead, it is used in a way that conveys notions of cherishing and/or admiring something of beauty insofar as its use is linked to descriptions of the wilderness as “a spectacular landscape of dramatic cliffs, underwater caves, sand spits and raised beaches” that “teems with all manner of animal, bird, marine and plant life” and contains “more than ten thousand square kilometres of lakebed, overlying waters, islands, shoals and shore lands” (Harper, 2007, October 25). Such descriptions emphasize non-economic values, such as the appreciation of beauty.

Near the end of this speech the Prime Minister states that the plan for the new marine conservation area will “protect key elements of the ecosystem while preserving the livelihoods of local residents who work in marine industries such as commercial fishing, sport fishing and shipping” (Harper, 2007, October 25). Although the latter industries will be allowed to continue, the Prime Minister specifically states that “[d]umping, mining, oil and gas exploration and extraction are prohibited throughout these areas” (Harper, 2007, October 25). It is this assertion that provides some level of assurance that the government is taking measures to ensure that economic activities do not encroach on the natural beauty of the marine conservation area.

In the December 5, 2007 speech given by Minister Baird he twice uses a ‘marathon’ metaphor in relation to the Kyoto Protocol. In his speech he describes the Protocol as “a 10-year marathon to reduce greenhouse gases around the world” and continues by arguing that “when the starting pistol of that marathon went off, Canada began to run in the opposite

direction under the previous government” (Baird, 2007, December 5). The comparison of the Kyoto Protocol to a marathon evokes notions of individualism, strength and endurance insofar as successfully completing a marathon – which is 26 mile/42.2 kilometre race – requires months of preparatory training, discipline and will-power from the sound of the starting pistol.

What is particularly noteworthy about Minister Baird’s use of the marathon metaphor in this speech is the way in which he links it to another metaphor. Specifically, the notion that by failing to meet its Kyoto targets the previous Liberal government had been running backwards, or regressing in terms of its greenhouse gas reduction targets. The juxtaposition the ‘marathon’ and ‘running backwards’ metaphors sets up the meeting of the Kyoto Protocol targets as unachievable given the actions – or lack thereof – of the previous Liberal government. This, in turn, provides a foundation for Minister Baird to assert that the implementation of a made-in-Canada approach to greenhouse gas reduction is a more appropriate strategy to follow.

In putting forth the argument for a made-in Canada approach, he replaces the marathon metaphor, and its associated individualistic undertones, with a metaphor that brings to mind a more group-oriented, co-operative effort. This is evidenced in his claim that in order to address global warming, government must “get everyone aboard, everyone with an oar in the water and everyone rowing together” (Baird, 2007, December 5). Here, Minister Baird offers a vision of group engagement in a cooperative effort aimed at achieving a common goal. This vision is reinforced, in part, through the repetition of the word ‘everyone,’ and the image of getting ‘everyone aboard.’ The latter suggests that people are working alongside each other and/or are members of the same group or association. To this end, Minister Baird uses the term ‘aboard,’ and its variation ‘onboard,’ four times in this speech.

For example, he speaks of getting “other countries aboard,” and ensuring that “big emitters [are] aboard” (Baird, 2007, December 5). At the close of the speech, he re-iterates the importance of getting “all major emitters onboard” (Baird, 2007, December 5).

The repeated references to cooperative activity depicted through the use of the rowing metaphor and the term ‘aboard/onboard’ within this speech serves to underscore the cooperative nature of the Conservatives’ plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This stands in stark contrast to the notion of completing a marathon which, generally, does not tend to be seen as a team sport. Given the positive connotations associated with notions of teamwork, cooperation and community it may be argued that the way in which the ‘marathon’ and ‘aboard/onboard’ metaphors are juxtaposed in the speech serves to present the Conservatives’ approach to tackling global warming as more being effective and appealing than that of their Liberal counterparts.

The theme of cooperation also is evident in the metaphors used by Minister Lunn in his speeches. For example, in his September 2007 speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, he noted that the environment, the economy, and energy “go hand in hand” (Lunn, 2007, September 12). This metaphor suggests close relationships or bonds, given that individuals who hold hands usually are in some type of partnership relationship (e.g. parent-child, couple, close friends, etc). As such, the use of the ‘hand in hand’ metaphor in this instance may be interpreted as emphasizing that a bond exists between the environment, the economy and the energy sector. More specifically, it suggests that the energy created through the exploitation of natural resources is closely connected with the success of this sector and, more broadly, the economy. The result appears to be an underscoring of the importance of ensuring that energy-related economic issues are not de-emphasized or dismissed in efforts to tackle environmental concerns.

Later in the same speech when discussing the importance of the energy sector to the Canadian economy, Minister Lunn describes the energy sector as “the anchor to our economy” (Lunn, 2007, September 12). Here, the anchor metaphor provides an image of an economy that is primarily based on the energy industry (in terms of jobs and/or exports, for example). The implication that follows is that, if the current strength of the energy sector is somehow reduced – as Lunn suggests the implementation of the Kyoto targets will do – the Canadian economy will drift like a boat without an anchor, aimless and vulnerable to changing winds.

There are two additional metaphors that were identified in the speeches that are noteworthy given the objectives of this thesis. Each of these is used in reference to the previous Liberal government. The first is found in Prime Minister Harper’s September 2007 speech in Sydney Australia at the conclusion of the 2007 APEC Summit. In this speech he claims that when his government took office it “inherited a patchwork of programs that just weren’t doing the job.” The second is found in Minister Lunn’s September 2007 speech discussed above. In this speech he asserts his desire to “call a spade a spade” and he goes on to stress what his government views as the excessive cost and difficulty associated with seeking to achieve Canada’s Kyoto Protocol targets as agreed to by the previous Liberal government.

Both of these metaphors may be described as ‘dying metaphors’. Orwell (2006, p.244) argues that, while a new metaphor “assists thought by evoking a visual image”, a dead or dying metaphor “has in effect reverted to being an ordinary word” by being so frequently used that it loses its vividness. Orwell further suggests that old and ‘dead’ metaphors are usually used when there is a lack of passion regarding the topic at hand.

The “patchwork of programs” metaphor employed by Prime Minister Harper conveys negative connotations insofar as it suggests that incongruous pieces have been assembled together in a hodgepodge fashion. This, in turn, may be interpreted as implying that the previous Liberal government’s environmental initiatives were perhaps ill-considered or hastily assembled.

The phrase ‘to call a spade a spade’ also is very much an old metaphor. It has been traced as far back as 1542 (Martin, n.d.).⁴² The manner in which Minister Lunn utilizes this metaphor to refer to a Liberal-backed program may function as a means to imply a lack of passion on the part of the former Liberal government with regard to environmental protection. To this end, the effort to foster negative associations about the previous government can be seen as a way to potentially persuade listeners to support the Conservatives’ environmental initiatives on the basis that they are fresh and more appealing.

In addition to the ‘call a spade a spade’ and ‘patchwork’ metaphors, ten other dying metaphors were identified. However, the context and the ways in which they were used suggest that they may not carry the same significance insofar as they were most frequently used as figures of speech. The other dying metaphors identified include:

- ‘international relations are rooted in common commitments,’ (Harper, 2007, August 21)
- ‘the world stage,’ (Harper, 2007, September 7)
- ‘bedrock principle,’ (Harper, 2007, September 9)
- ‘greenhouse gases will skyrocket,’ (Baird, 2007, December 5)
- ‘building blocks for a future agreement,’ (Baird, 2007, December 5)
- ‘the planet cannot be let down,’ (Baird, 2007, December 5)
- ‘on these fronts,’ (Lunn, 2007, September 12)

⁴² There is some confusion as to whether the ‘spade’ refers to a shovel, or whether the word is a derogatory reference to people of African descent (Martin, n.d.). This further sullies the ability of the ‘call a spade a spade’ metaphor to impart a vivid image to the reader/listener.

- ‘play a role,’ (Lunn, 2007, October 26)
- ‘cornerstone of our economy,’ (Lunn, 2007, October 26)) and
- ‘Canada can leave its mark’(Lunn, 2007, October 26)

Within the 49 press releases analysed, 28 metaphors were identified. This is fewer than the number of metaphors identified in the government speeches and may be explained, in part, by differences in the target audiences of the messages conveyed through the two mediums. The information provided in Table 4.10 lists the frequency of appearance of the metaphors identified in the press releases.

Table 4.10: Metaphors used in Press Releases

Source of Press Release	Title of Press Release	Date	Type of Metaphor	Frequency of use
Environment Canada	Canada Calls New UN Agreement an Important First Step	Dec 15, 2007	• all countries must be on board	1
			• the building blocks for a framework	1
			• need to be on board	1
			• Turning the Corner Plan	1
Natural Resources Canada	Canada launches clean energy software	Dec 11, 2007	• play a significant role	1
EcoAction	The Government of Canada Announces Further Progress Under the Chemicals Management Plan	Aug 24, 2007	• hand in hand	1
EcoAction	\$500M Fund Launched to Support Next-Generation Renewable Fuels	Sept 12, 2007	• big step forward	1
			• arm’s-length	1
EcoAction	Unique Community a Model for a Greener, Healthier Canada	Sept 13, 2007	• plugging into the potential of renewable energy	1
EcoAction	Canada Calls for Accelerated Phase-Out of Ozone Depleting Substances	Sept 14, 2007	• on-track	1

Table 4.10: Metaphors used in Press Releases, cont'd

Source of Press Release	Title of Press Release	Date	Type of Metaphor	Frequency of use
EcoAction	Canada Receives UN Award for Ozone Protection Leadership	Sept 17, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role Canada plays • the world stage 	1
EcoAction	Saskatchewan producers take steps to improve environment	Sept 20, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • farmers play an important role 	1
EcoAction	Canada Joins Major Economies to Advance Post-2012 Climate Change Agenda	Sept 28, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning the corner 	1
EcoAction	SDTC Portfolio Reaches \$1 Billion in Cleantech Funding - \$30.3 million in new funding approved for 14 companies	Oct 25, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reached a major milestone • embraced our model • arm's-length 	2
EcoAction	Canada's Leadership in Hydrogen Technology Honoured at World Energy Congress	Nov 14, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on the world stage 	1
EcoAction	Canada's Environment Minister Welcomes the Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	Nov 17, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning the Corner • a stepping stone 	1
EcoAction	UN Ranks Canada in Top 5 Best Places to Live – Canada Continues to Deliver Leadership on Climate Change	Nov 27, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all with an oar in the water, rowing in the same direction 	1
EcoAction	Renewable Fuels Bill Clears the Way for Renewable Fuel Content	Dec 3, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A real dent in greenhouse gas emissions 	1
EcoAction	Drivers, Stop Your Engines: Idle-Free Quiet Zone Launched at Truck Stops	Dec 4, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gearing up • important role to play 	1
EcoAction	Canada Takes Action to Help Developing Countries Fight Climate Change	Dec 10, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world's stage 	1
EcoAction	Canada Supports UN Principles for New Climate Change Deal	Dec 10, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building blocks 	1

Table 4.10: Metaphors used in Press Releases, cont'd

Source of Press Release	Title of Press Release	Date	Type of Metaphor	Frequency of use
EcoAction	Government of Canada Gets Tough on Climate Change: Orders Industry to Submit Air Emissions Information	Dec 12, 2007	• a major step forward	1
TOTAL				28

Of the 28 metaphors identified in the press releases, 11 being used simply as figures of speech that did not imply any deeper metaphorical meaning. As such, they are not discussed in detail below. The metaphors in question include:

- *play a role* (Natural Resources Canada, 2007, December 11; EcoAction, 2007, September 20; EcoAction, 2007, December 4)
- *building blocks* (Environment Canada, 2007, December 15; EcoAction, 2007, December 10)
- *big/major step forward* (EcoAction, 2007, September 12; EcoAction, 2007, December 12)
- *arm's length organization* (EcoAction, 2007, September 12; EcoAction, 2007, October 25)
- *on-track* (EcoAction, 2007, September 14)
- *a major milestone* (EcoAction, 2007, October 25)
- *stepping stone* (EcoAction, 2007, November 17)
- *put a dent in greenhouse gas emissions* (EcoAction, 2007, December 3)
- *gearing up* (EcoAction, 2007, December 4)

Three of the metaphors identified in press releases issued by EcoAction also were present in the speeches. They are:

- hand in hand;
- need to be on board; and
- all with an oar in the water, rowing in the same direction.

Whereas the notion of 'hand in hand' was used in Minister Lunn's September 2007 speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce as a means to convey the interconnectedness of the energy sector and the environment, within a press release announcing that the government is collecting information from industry about "how they are safely managing and using 19 chemical substances identified as high priorities for action under the Chemicals Management Plan" (EcoAction, 2007, August 24) it was used to connect health and safety issues with environmental issues. Within this document, the 'hand in hand' metaphor was used in a statement indicating that, "Protecting and preserving our environment comes hand in hand with protecting the health and safety of Canadians" (EcoAction, 2007, August 24). In the paragraph following the use of this metaphor, environment and health are again connected through a statement indicating that once the government receives information from industry about these high priority chemicals, it will decide on the appropriate actions required to protect the health of Canadians and the environment (EcoAction, 2007, August 24).

Within the context of this particular press release, associating physical intimacy (i.e. hand in hand) with a political policy may be interpreted as a means of potentially influencing public perceptions of the government's environmental and health policies in a positive manner. This connection also distracts from the vague assertion that the government will take 'appropriate' actions to protect human health and environmental health.

In another press release published by EcoAction on December 15, 2007 that deals with a new international agreement on greenhouse gas reductions reached at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Minister Baird is quoted as stating that "all major emitters, including China, India and the United States, need to be on board" with Canada's

position that there should be an internationally binding and effective plan for achieving greenhouse gas reductions. This statement echoes Minister Baird's use of the 'on board' and 'aboard' metaphors in his December 2007 speech to the Economic Club of Toronto. In both instances these metaphors appear to function as a means of enabling the Minister to characterize the government's initiatives as being more effective and cooperatively-oriented than those of the previous Liberal government.

The third metaphor that was found in both mediums – “all with an oar, rowing in the same direction” was identified in a November 2007 press release from EcoAction. It is, essentially, the same metaphor that was used in Minister Baird's December 2007 speech in Toronto.⁴³ In both instances the metaphor is used in relation to the government's initiative to create a greenhouse gas reduction plan that includes big emitters. Much like the metaphor of everyone being 'on board' or 'aboard,' the 'all with an oar, rowing in the same direction' metaphor connotes cooperation and group effort.

A metaphor that appeared in three press releases but which was not present in any of the nine speeches analyzed is 'turning the corner.' This metaphor appeared three times. Once in a December 2007 press release from Environment Canada focusing on a new UN agreement for the reduction of greenhouse gases called the *Bali Roadmap*, once in a September 2007 press release from EcoAction regarding post-2012 climate change discussions, and once in an EcoAction press release from November 2007 dealing with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, n.d.).

In all three cases the metaphor is part of the title of the Conservatives' *Turning the Corner Plan*, a policy that includes mandatory greenhouse gas reduction targets for all

⁴³ Recall that in his Toronto speech, Minister Baird used the metaphor in a statement suggesting that all nations need to be involved in an agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Canadian industries that produce them.⁴⁴ The metaphor of ‘turning the corner’ is frequently used to suggest that after a long struggle, positive change is finally going to happen.⁴⁵ To this end, the title of the *Turning the Corner Plan* may be interpreted as making implicit – if not explicit – reference to the Kyoto Protocol targets that were agreed to by the previous Liberal government. As such, the use of this metaphor in this instance may be seen as rhetorical technique for implying that the Conservative’s plan will lead to new success in Canadian efforts to protect the environment.

Another metaphor that was identified only in the press releases is the notion of Canada being on ‘the world stage’. This metaphor positions Canada as being the focus of world attention and/or an equal player in international affairs. It appeared three times in the press releases analyzed. The first was in a September 2007 press release from EcoAction announcing Canada’s receipt of a UN Award for leadership in the protection of the ozone layer. Within this press release Minister Baird is quoted as stating that he is “proud of the role Canada continues to play on the world stage” in relation to its efforts to reduce HCFCs (EcoAction, 2007, September 17).

The second was in a quote from Minister Lunn in a November 2007 press releases about Canada being honoured at the World Energy Congress. In this press release he is quoted as saying, “The Government of Canada is proud to be recognized on the world stage for our work on the BC Hydrogen Highway (EcoAction, 2007, November 14). In the third instance the ‘world stage’ metaphor was identified in a press release announcing Canada’s

⁴⁴ The Plan targets a 20 percent reduction of 2006 greenhouse gas emission levels by 2020, and a 60-70 percent reduction by 2050 (EcoAction, 2007, November 17; Environment Canada, 2008).

⁴⁵ This phrase also has been used by other politicians seeking to emphasize something positive. For example, U.S. President George W. Bush repeatedly used this phrase in his 2004 election campaign to emphasize how his administration had improved the quality of life in the United States and abroad. Following extensive criticism of the President’s reliance on this phrase, it was dropped from his 2004 campaign speeches. Nonetheless, it continues to be used in reference to the U.S. situation in Iraq.

contribution of \$7.5 million to the Global Environment Facility's Special Climate Change Fund. In this press release, Minister Baird is quoted as stating that "[t]his is yet another example of Canada showing real leadership on the world stage" (EcoAction, 2007, December 10).

Given that in each of the three cases outlined above, the 'world stage' metaphor is used in relation to Canada's international standing, it may be argued that its use does not suggest an explicit (or implicit) effort to exaggerate Canada's position in the world with regard to environmental issues. Instead, it appears to be an accurate metaphor to describe recognition Canada has received internationally, or contributions the country has made to international organizations working in the environmental domain.

Overall, the evidence obtained from the analysis of metaphor usage in the government speeches and press releases suggests that they are mainly used in two ways. The first is as a rhetorical tool to imply meanings that suggest a positive perspective about the environmental initiatives of the current government. This technique may influence how a speech is received insofar as "any political speech [...] evokes its most compelling cognitions in a large part of its audience (and in the speaker himself) through the metaphoric views it takes for granted rather than those it explicitly asserts and calls to people's attention" (Edelman, 1967, p.69). In other words, a speaker may be telling the audience more about her/his perspective regarding a particular topic through the metaphors s/he employs than through what is explicitly stated. The second way in which metaphors appear to be used across the two mediums examined is more mundane in nature. It entails using them as figures of speech aimed at helping to convey messages in a short and familiar manner.

The evidence regarding the use of metaphors also suggests that they are used more frequently in speeches given by government representatives than in government press releases. This finding may reflect the different functions of the two mediums. Whereas speeches tend to be presented directly to an audience that often includes members of the general public and/or other interested stakeholders, press releases are targeted at media professionals (e.g. journalists). Given these differences in target audiences, it seems plausible that the government may have to adjust the hortatory techniques it employs accordingly.

4.2: The Use of Legal Language in Speeches and Press Releases

According to Edelman (1967) the use of legal language in political discourse is a particularly effective technique for gaining widespread public support for government initiatives and policies because this language-type allows for a range of meanings to be read into it. At issue here is what he identifies as the strong likelihood of the average layperson assuming that the meaning of legal language can be achieved through recourse to dictionary definitions. However, legal language does not always reflect the actual role of the act or dictum being discussed. To this end, Edelman suggests that the flexibility of many legal acts is demonstrated by the differing interpretations of the same language produced in different times by different authorities with varying group interests. Commenting on this issue, he writes, “[i]t is precisely this ambiguity that gives lawyers, judges, and administrators a political and social function, for unambiguous rules would, by definition, call neither for interpretation nor for argument as to their meaning” (Edelman, 1967, p.139).

Table 4.11: Legal language in speeches

SPEECHES				
Person	Speech Title	Date Given	Legal language	Frequency of use
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park	Aug 8, 2007	• Order in Council	1
Stephen Harper	Notes for an Address by The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada To the APEC Business Summit	Sept 7, 2007	• Kyoto Protocol	1
Stephen Harper	Statement by the Prime Minister at the Conclusion of the 2007 APEC Summit	Sept 9, 2007	• Sydney Declaration	2
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Stephen Harper addresses the House of Commons in a reply to the Speech from the Throne	Oct 17, 2007	• Kyoto Protocol	2
John Baird	Speech by the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment At the Economic Club of Toronto	Dec 5, 2007	• Kyoto Protocol	5
Gary Lunn	Speech to Calgary Chamber of Commerce luncheon	Sept 12, 2007	• Kyoto Protocol	4
TOTAL				15

Table 4.12: Legal language in press releases**PRESS RELEASES**

Source	Press Release Title	Date	Legal language	Frequency of use
EcoAction	Canada Calls for Accelerated Phase-Out of Ozone Depleting Substances	Sept 14, 2007	• Montreal Protocol	3
EcoAction	Canada Receives UN Award for Ozone Protection Leadership	Sept 17, 2007	• Montreal Protocol	3
EcoAction	Canada Contributes to Major International Agreement to Protect the Ozone Layer and Tackle Climate Change	Sept 22, 2007	• Montreal Protocol	3
EcoAction	Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act proclaimed	Nov 7, 2007	• Motor Vehicle Consumption Standards Act • Memorandum of Understanding	4 1
EcoAction	Renewable Fuels Bill Clears the Way for Renewable Fuel Content	Dec 3, 2007	• Renewable Fuels Bill • Canadian Environmental Protection Act • Clean Air Act	2 1 1
TOTAL				18

Within the nine speeches analyzed, 15 examples of legal language were identified across six speeches (see Table 4.11) of which 12 were references to the Kyoto Protocol. The use of legal language was more limited in the 49 press releases analyzed, with only 18 examples of the use of legal language identified in five press releases (see Tables 4.11 and 4.12). One half of these examples were references to the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*.⁴⁶ The discussion below examines the differences across the mediums in more detail.

In a September 2007 speech presented to the APEC Business Summit, Prime Minister Stephen Harper states that his government is willing to recognize one aspect of the Kyoto

⁴⁶ This Protocol is an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program that was first ratified in 1987. It is intended to combat ozone depletion through the phasing out of HCFC's. See, UNEP (2007) and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987).

Protocol, telling his audience that “[w]e will recognize the purchase of certain types of credits certified under the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism” (Harper, 2007, September 7). While he apparently acknowledges the utility of one aspect of the Protocol with this statement, he does not expand upon how this Clean Development Mechanism works, beyond noting that the program will be “robust, fair and efficient” (Harper, 2007, September 7).

One month later, in his October 2007 reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister argues that the Liberal government “had no intention of making the Kyoto target” (Harper, 2007, October 17). This in turn, he claims, means that the Conservative government is severely handicapped in its ability to meet the targets set out by the Kyoto Protocol. From this statement, he segues into a discussion of the revised targets that have been set by his government, a plan he avers is “among the most aggressive in the world” (Harper, 2007, October 17). However, the Prime Minister does not elaborate on the contents of the Kyoto Protocol or of his government’s plan at any point during this speech, choosing instead to focus on the Protocol’s potentially negative implications for the Canadian economy.

Minister Baird’s references to the Kyoto Protocol, in his December 5, 2007 speech at the Economic Club of Toronto, also were rather vague and mostly negative. Specifically, he never identified what were Canada’s Kyoto Protocol targets, noting only that “we are 32.9 per cent above our Kyoto target” (Baird, 2007, December 5). The blame for the inability of the current government to reach the Kyoto targets is placed squarely on the shoulders of the previous Liberal government whom he argues “began to run in the opposite direction” once the Protocol was implemented (Baird, 2007, December 5).

While Minister Baird mentions the Kyoto Protocol several times, he does not set out any specifics about the Protocol, focusing instead on the shortcomings of the previous government's implementation strategies and the apparent overall ineffectiveness of the Protocol. His only positive comment regarding the Kyoto Protocol is tied to an acknowledgment that his government wants to start a carbon market in Canada, and will "use the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanisms where companies can buy credits from high level, blue chip opportunities that are regulated by the United Nations" (Baird, 2007, December 5). This single positive reference to the Protocol comes in the middle of his discussion of the government's plan⁴⁷ to reduce greenhouse gases. As such, it may be seen to function as a support for the latter policy rather than as a means of highlighting any potentially positive aspects of the Kyoto Protocol.

Minister Lunn's September 2007 speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce also is vague in terms of setting out exactly the Kyoto Protocol entails despite the fact that it too associates negative attributes to the Protocol. In this speech he notes that the Prime Minister has said that

Kyoto created two groups of countries. It creates those without targets and those who won't achieve their targets. Those are the two groups. And it's true. (Lunn, 2007, September 12).

He then continues by arguing that

[t]rying to pretend we can achieve Kyoto, it's not real; it's not being honest with Canadians (Lunn, 2007, September 12).

While each of these statements emphasize the inability of Canada to achieve its Kyoto targets, at no point does the Minister explain what, exactly, those targets are. Instead, he

⁴⁷ The name of this new greenhouse gas reduction plan was not specified in any of the speeches. Typically, the government's initiatives were referred to using vague phrases such as "Canada's own domestic policy" (Harper, 2007, September 7) or "a plan and a national goal" (Baird, 2007, December 5).

simply claims that if Canada were to attempt to achieve its Kyoto targets “the cost would be enormous to this country” (Lunn, 2007, September 12).

Although Minister Lunn’s comments appear to be purposefully vague vis-à-vis details of what the implementation of Kyoto Protocol entails, it appears, nonetheless, that his objective is to directly influence how his audience views the Protocol. This seems to contradict Edelman’s (1967) assertion that legal language often is used in the political domain in a manner that allows the audience to read a range of meanings into the messages conveyed.

While the references to the Kyoto Protocol contained within the speeches analyzed were mostly vague and negative, it must be acknowledged that the fact that little explanation was provided regarding the specific content of the Protocol may, in part, reflect who comprised the audiences in attendance. The two speeches given by the Prime Minister that referred to the Protocol were presented at the APEC Summit in Sydney, Australia and at the House of Commons in Ottawa, respectively. Given these settings, it seems fair to assume that most of the individuals present for the speech would have been more familiar with some of the specificities of the Kyoto Protocol than the average layperson.

Likewise, it seems plausible that for his speech to members of the Economic Club of Toronto Minister Baird may have been in a position to anticipate that his audience would likely have an advanced understanding of the implications of the Kyoto Protocol, given that this organization bills itself as ‘Canada’s Leading Public Affairs Forum’ (Economic Club of Toronto, n.d.). As for the audience members attending Minister Lunn’s speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, they too can be expected to have been broadly aware of the potential economic implications of meeting the Kyoto Protocol targets insofar as this

organization is for business owners that derive their wealth from the natural resources sector in the province Alberta.

There were two examples of the use of legal language identified within the speeches analyzed were not linked to the Kyoto Protocol. The first was a reference to an Order in Council in an August 2007 speech given by Prime Minister Harper in which he announced the designation of new parkland. While the Prime Minister never explains what an Order in Council is, he does state that “our federal Cabinet has approved an Order in Council to enable a significant expansion of the boundaries of Nahanni National Park Reserve” (Harper, 2007, August 8). By specifying the legal action that allowed the designation of the park, the Prime Minister does, to some extent, utilize legal language in the manner envisioned by Edelman (1967) – i.e. the exact nature of an Order in Council remains vague within the context that the phrase is used. However, the *results* of the Order in Council are clear – new parkland has been designated.

The second example of the use of legal language is found in a September 2007 speech given by Prime Minister Harper at the conclusion of the APEC Summit in which he makes passing mention of the Sydney Declaration⁴⁸ saying that he is “very pleased that the Sydney Declaration mirrors the Canadian climate change approach on many levels” (Harper, 2007, September 9). No mention is made, however, of what this Declaration is, apart from the fact that it is ‘effective’ and has ‘clear goals.’ That said, given that the speech was given at the close of the APEC Summit, where the Declaration was created, it follows that the Prime Minister could reasonably presume that those in attendance were

⁴⁸ The Sydney Declaration is an agreement signed in September of 2007 by the APEC countries. The Declaration committed member countries to working together to ensure “the energy needs of the economies of the region while addressing the issue of environmental quality and contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions” (APEC, 2007).

familiar with the outcomes of the summit. Therefore, while this use of legal language was vague, this vagueness did not appear to function in the same manner as argued by Edelman (1967) because it does not appear to be intended to foster support for the government based on the ability of the audience to read their own meanings into the edict.

Within the sample press releases, the most frequently cited legal document was *The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*. It was mentioned in nine of the 18 instances of legal language use identified. For example, in a press release issued by Minister Baird in September 2007 and published by EcoAction, it is announced that Canada is hosting a United Nations meeting in Montreal, Quebec to commemorate the 20th anniversary of this Protocol. Following a definition of HCFCs, it is indicated in the press release that under the Protocol the,

use of HCFCs is set to cease in developed countries in 2030 and in developing countries in 2040. HCFCs not only harm the ozone layer but also contribute to global warming (EcoAction, 2007, September 14).

In this particular press release the key elements of the Montreal Protocol are clearly explained and the reader is provided with additional background and factual information (e.g. original date of signature, the number of original and current signatories, levels of reduction in production and consumption in ozone thinning chemicals since the protocol's implementation).

In another press release, also published by EcoAction in September 2007, it is indicated that “[u]nder the Montreal Protocol, countries have committed to eliminating harmful substances, called hydrochlorofluorocarbons, that deplete the ozone layer and contribute to global warming” (EcoAction, 2007, September 17). This statement also provides a clear, general description of what the Protocol contains, and why it was signed.

In a third press release, also published September 2007, it is announced “that countries attending the Montreal Protocol conference have reached a major agreement to speed up the phase-out of chemicals that harm the ozone layer and cause climate change” (EcoAction, 2007, September 22). Again, the goal of the Protocol is made clear as are the changes made to the agreement being presented in the announcement.

The manner in which legal language is used in the three above press releases stands in stark contrast to Edelman’s (1964) assertions about how this language type is most often used. Specifically, the information provided in each instance is sufficient to provide the reader with a general understanding of the content of the Protocol. This finding would seem to challenge Edelman’s (1964, p.139) claim that the primary function of legal language in government discourse is to provide “a basis for assuming that there is a mechanical, precise, objective definition of law,” when in fact the need for judges and administrators (who often do contradictory or different things with the same law, according to Edelman) points to the need for interpretation of laws.

As was indicated by the information presented in Table 4.12, there were five legal edicts referred to in the press releases in addition to the Montreal Protocol. They were: the Motor Vehicle Consumption Standards Act, a Memorandum of Understanding, the Renewable Fuels Bill, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and the Clean Air Act. The information in Table 4.13 provides a summary of the information contained within these five other press releases.

Table 4.13: Press Releases Referring to Legal Edicts other than the Montreal Protocol

Source	Date	Focus	Details
EcoAction	Nov 2007	Passing into law of the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act (MVFCSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear description of the Act • full paragraph of devoted to listing the vehicles to which the Act applies, and how much emissions will be reduced by 2010. • Identify MVFCSA as intended to replace 2005 MOU with Canadian auto industry on voluntary reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for new cars
EcoAction	Dec 2007	Announce introduction of <i>Bill C-33, An Act to Amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a clear description of the goal of the Bill – e.g. note that Bill is an amendment to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, • identifies aim of Bill “allow the Government implement regulations which will require five per cent average renewable content in gasoline by 2010” (EcoAction, 2007, December 3a). • Quote from Minister Baird who notes the Bill will play “a key part in the fight against climate change” (EcoAction, 2007, December 3a)
EcoAction	Dec 2007	Introduction of the Renewable Fuels Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference to the Clean Air Act • note that changes proposed for Canadian Environmental Protection Act in the Renewable Fuels Bill “were originally proposed in the Clean Air Act” • Identify Renewable Fuels Bill as fulfilling “another commitment made in the Speech from the Throne” (EcoAction, 2007, December 3).

In each of the press releases listed in Table 4.13 a clear description of the legislation in question, its background and its rationale is provided. As with the Montreal Protocol examples, the detailed information provided in these press releases appears to contradict Edelman's (1967) assertion that government use of legal language is usually vague and lacking explanations of what is contained in legal edicts. The evidence also does not appear to support his contention that legal language often is used by governments in order to sound impressive and to avoid explaining the content of its edicts.

Overall, the evidence obtained from the analysis of the speeches and press releases suggests that the manner in which legal language is employed in both mediums within the Canadian environmental context does not support Edelman's (1967) assertions about how, and the reasons why, legal language is used in government communication with the public. Moreover, the evidence emerging from the content analysis suggests that when legal language is used within the context of environment-related speeches it often is associated with the use of persuasive language that appears to be aimed at influencing the perspective of the listener in a particular manner.

The implication of this finding is twofold. First, it suggests that although representatives of the Canadian government may use legal language that is oriented toward persuading the public to support government policies and initiatives, this is not being primarily achieved through a reliance on vague references to legal edicts. Instead, it appears that government representatives are referring to the government's environment-related edicts in both speeches and press releases in such a way that the content is explained, but in a manner that implies efforts to influence the audience to support the government's position.

The second implication of this finding is that legal language appears to be used somewhat differently in each of the mediums. The evidence from the analysis of the use of legal language within environment-related speeches reveals a notable absence of references to specific Acts and/or policies put forth, or enacted, by the Conservative government. Instead, vague phrases such as ‘our plan’ are used. In the press releases, on the other hand, Conservative-backed initiatives tend to be referred to by name, and their contents clearly explained. To this end, it may be argued that a central function of the legal language used in environment-related speeches analyzed in this thesis appears to be to shine negative light on the policies of the previous government, whereas in the press releases the use of this language type tends to be used in a manner that emphasizes the policies and initiatives of the current government in a positive light.

4.3: The Use of Administrative Language in Speeches and Press Releases⁴⁹

Edelman (1967) claims that the use of administrative language typically is constrained to appointed officials and administrative staff rather than high-level or elected officials.⁵⁰ He notes that this administrative group of government officials is the only group that, generally, is able to make use of this style of language because the administrator’s function is to carry out the will of elected officials, as opposed to that of the public.

No examples of administrative language were identified in the speeches or press releases included in the sample. This, however, was expected finding given that:

⁴⁹ Recall that administrative language is characterized as involving the giving of instructions and words/phrases/terms that often are often opaque to those outside the organization.

⁵⁰ This is explained, in part, by that fact that he views administrative language as being primarily “addressed to a public or to employees who are expected to comply with its instructions directly and or immediately” (Edelman, 1967, p.143).

- the speeches were given by elected officials to members of the general public, interest groups, other elected officials and journalists; and
- government press releases tend to be presented on behalf of elected, rather than appointed, officials; and are intended for an audience that is mainly comprised of journalists.

Put simply, the two mediums analyzed for this thesis were not conducive to the use of administrative language because are not intended to be channels for administrative officials to communicate.

4.4: The Use of Bargaining Language in Speeches and Press Releases

According to Edelman (1967), in the political domain bargaining language is not generally observed by the public because its use is largely limited to discussions that take place behind closed doors in private sessions attended only by the concerned stakeholders. He argues that when the public is made aware by government officials that bargaining and negotiations are, or will be, taking place this usually is to suggest to citizens “that the public interest is being carefully safeguarded by knowledgeable sages [...] and sometimes the view that unscrupulous ‘interests’ are plotting for private gain at the public’s expense” (Edelman, 1967, p.147). This suggests that relatively few examples of the use of bargaining language should be identified in the sampled speeches and press releases. The evidence from the content analysis supports this notion, with only one example of bargaining language identified in the speeches and six examples identified in the press releases.

With regard to the speeches, in his December 2007 speech to the Economic Club of Toronto, Minister Baird states that “[t]he world must come together and agree to launch negotiations on a post-2012 agreement next week in Indonesia” (Baird, 2007, December 5). This statement positions the Canadian government as firmly in favour of ensuring that

regulation of greenhouse gases continues past the 2012 termination date of the Kyoto Protocol's prescribed cuts to greenhouse gas emissions. By pointing to the necessity of continued negotiations, Minister Baird is, essentially, positioning the Canadian government as a potential driving force behind any future planning and discussions. More importantly, his statement serves to convey the notion that the Government of Canada is working to ensure that the public interest – domestic and international – is being protected.

It must be noted, however, that despite the implicit suggestion in the Minister's comments that the government is taking a hard stance on pollution, the Conservative's have been accused by many observers of taking a softer stance on reducing greenhouse gas emissions than the targets set out in the Kyoto Accord ("Envoys take overnight break," 2007; "Baird's 'real' emissions plan," 2007; "Conservatives abandon Kyoto," 2007). While other Kyoto signatories⁵¹ have pledged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels,⁵² the Conservative government has elected to reduce emissions only to 2006 levels ("Envoys take overnight break," 2007, "Conservatives abandon Kyoto," 2007).⁵³ Seen in this light, the claim that the Canadian government is pushing to ensure that regulations are extended beyond 2012 may be seen as indicative of a commitment on the part of the Conservatives to establish environmental policy, while downplaying the rigor – or lack thereof – of the environment standards it appears to favour.

⁵¹ The Kyoto signatories include industrialized nations such as Canada, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Japan, as well as developing nations such as Peru, Vietnam, Armenia, the Philippines and Ethiopia.

⁵² Note that these levels vary by country. Countries are expected to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2 per cent in comparison to 1990 levels, although developing countries are able to pick different base years.

⁵³ Since 1990, emissions from Canada's gas and oil industries have risen by 42%. See, 'Science in Retreat' (2008).

In total, only five examples of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques associated with the use of bargaining language were identified within the 49 press releases examined. Furthermore, the use of this language type was identified in only two press releases. The first, entitled *Canada Supports UN Principles for New Climate Change Deal*, was issued in December 2007 by EcoAction and discusses three major goals emerging from the United Nations Climate Change Conference that took place in Bali in December 2007 (EcoAction, 2007, December 10b).⁵⁴ It includes two examples of the use of bargaining language, each of which centers on the three goals that were agreed to at the conference. Two of the three goals are outlined as follows (EcoAction, 2007, December 10b):

- “[t]he world must come together and agree to launch negotiations on a post-2012 agreement.”; and
- “there must be an agreement to an end date for negotiations”.⁵⁵

Furthermore, the press release states that “Canada is in agreement with those elements and is seeking an end date of 2009 for negotiations.” Taken together, these three statements suggest a clear notion of the government’s goals going into the negotiations, but no specific details are provided. Such a vague depiction of the goals of the bargaining and negotiations in which the Canadian government is involved regarding this matter may be interpreted as an example of the government attempting to convey a message that it does not engage “in bargaining but in rational devising of means to achieving goals to benefit the public

⁵⁴ The United Nations Climate Change Conference was hosted by the Government of Indonesia from December 3-15, 2007. The conference hosted more than 10,000 participants, including observers from non-profit organizations, and representatives of the governments of 180 countries. The objective of this meeting was to develop an agreement on actions regarding climate change and led to the signing of the Bali Roadmap. The latter is a document “which consists of a number of forward-looking decisions that represent the various tracks that are essential to reaching a secure climate future” (UNCCC, n.d.).

⁵⁵ The manner in which the third goal is presented does not entail the use of bargaining language. Instead, it is noted within this press release that Canada is in agreement with these goals, “and is seeking an end date of 2009 for negotiations” (EcoAction, 2007, December 10b). In addition, it is pointed out that Canada is pushing for all major emitters to be included in the agreement, with “common but differentiated targets” (EcoAction, 2007, December 10b).

generally” (Edelman, 1967, p. 147). As such, it may be argued that this example of the use of bargaining language supports Edelman’s contention that bargaining language is used to depict the government as working to ensure that the interests of the public are protected, while remaining vague on exactly how those interests will be protected.

The second press release in which the use of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques associated with bargaining language was identified was issued by Environment Canada in December 2007. It is entitled *Canada Calls New UN Agreement an Important First Step*. In this press release Minister Baird is quoted as stating:

[m]ake no mistake; the next two years will be a challenge, with long and intense negotiations. Canada looks forward to meeting that challenge and to working with our international partners to develop a global solution in the fight against climate change (Government of Canada, 2007, December 15).

This statement refers to the decision by the Canadian government to commence a two-year effort aimed at developing a world-wide plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In his statement, Minister Baird emphasizes that the negotiations will be difficult, but that his government is committed to putting in the required effort to ensure a ‘global solution’ to climate change is achieved. However, he never specifies what precise outcome he and his government will be striving toward as they work with other countries in these negotiations. The only indication provided is that they want an agreement “that leads to real greenhouse gas reductions” (EcoAction, December 15, 2007). As such, his statement implies that the outcomes will be for the public good, but nothing specific is explicitly stated. This finding also appears to support Edelman’s (1964, p.148) assertion that, while negotiations are not usually public, governmental actors involved in negotiations try to impart on the public an image that “[emphasizes] the alleged purpose of protecting the public generally,” while not

acknowledging the interests of the government involved in the negotiations, or the types of bargaining that take place behind closed doors.

In all, it may be concluded that the limited evidence obtained from the content analysis regarding the use of bargaining language in government speeches and press releases appears to support Edelman's (1964) assertion that bargaining language often is used by government representatives to assure the public that, while discussions may be taking place behind closed doors, the government is working to ensure that their interests are being protected.

CHAPTER 5: Analysis of Linguistic Manifestations of Power

By focusing on the environmental initiatives of the Conservative government as manifest in the speeches of its representatives and in its press releases, this thesis has set out to investigate how the discursive techniques employed by government to convey its messages to the Canadian public contribute to the maintenance of government power.

The evidence presented in the previous chapter revealed three main findings:

1. Hortatory language was the most frequently employed language-type in the materials analyzed. Since the hortatory language identified appeared to function to persuade target audiences to support the environmental initiatives of the current government, this finding appears to support Edelman's (1967) assertion that the hortatory language style is a particularly useful for politicians wishing to build support.
2. The ways in which legal language was used within the speeches and press releases does not appear to support Edelman's (1967) claims regarding how this language-type is employed in the political domain. Specifically, most uses of legal language identified in the current study were linked to clear descriptions of the content of the edicts being discussed as opposed to being vague or ambiguous.⁵⁶ This does not square with Edelman's (1967) argument that legal language is purposefully vague so that the audience can read their own meaning into the legal acts described.
3. When present, bargaining language appeared to be used in a hortatory manner. This finding appears to support Edelman's (1967) assertions about how this particular language type is most frequently employed in the political domain insofar as when it was present in the materials analyzed it appeared to be intended to imply that the government is working to ensure that the public interest is being protected.

The discussion in the remainder of this chapter centers on the implications of these findings in terms of how the Conservative government employs language in its environmental discourse to influence the maintenance of its political power.

The discussion is divided into three sections. The first looks at the implications of the findings with regard to the central research question. The discussion in the second section

⁵⁶ The legal language used in association with the Kyoto Protocol was the one exception. Although the contents of the Protocol were not explained, the contexts within which the Protocol was referred to appeared to guide the intended audience toward a negative perception of this edict.

examines the efficacy of Edelman's (1967) framework within the Canadian context and the implications of the findings of this thesis vis-à-vis notions of political language outlined in the literature review. In the third section of this discussion the findings are summarized.

5.1: Language and the *Power to/Power over* debate

*5.1.1: The notion of Power to*⁵⁷

Drawing on the findings presented in Chapter 3, there appears to be little evidence in the speeches and press releases analyzed of the use of language in a manner that is conducive with Arendt's (1958; 1969; 1983) postulations regarding the notion of *power to*. Her perspective concerning the relationship between language and politics is based on the notion that government must have the support of the public to be truly powerful and that such support must be achieved through transparent communication with citizens.

According to this interpretation of the notion of *power to*, rather than attempting to curb the range of political views by actively influencing – or shaping – public opinion government-citizen communication should be marked by open discussion aimed at reaching consensus.

The evidence from this thesis and, in particular, the predominant use of hortatory language strategies - combined with the use of legal and bargaining language – for persuasive purposes raises questions about the extent to which the power of the current Conservative government can be seen to be based predominantly on transparency and cooperative communication with Canadian citizens. Indeed, the way in which hortatory language appeared to be employed in the speeches and press releases analyzed suggests the presence of a bias aimed at fostering support for the government's environmental

⁵⁷ Recall that subscribers to the notion of *power to* view power as action-in-concert. As such, this approach tends to emphasize the communicative aspects of political life.

initiatives. Insofar as the hortatory language identified appeared to function in a persuasive manner, rather than the transparent manner described by Arendt, the use of this language type in the environmental discourse of the Conservative government did not appear to support the notion of *power to*.

Furthermore, while at first glance the legal language found in the press releases appears to be open and transparent, a more detailed analysis suggests that it may function in a persuasive manner that seeks to encourage support for the Conservatives' greenhouse gas reduction initiatives. This implies that the government may be able to contribute to its legitimacy by appearing to be open and honest with the public when, in fact, the language employed within the mediums analyzed suggests manipulative ends. In other words, apparently transparent statements may actually disguise an intent to manipulate public opinion such that the environmental initiatives of the current government may be viewed as being oriented toward taking aggressive steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when, in fact, the greenhouse gas reduction targets set out in the *Turning the Corner* regulatory framework are much less stringent than those established by the Kyoto Protocol.

It must be noted, however, that the persuasive elements of language use identified through the analysis of the speeches and the press releases does appear to support some elements of the arguments put forth by Habermas (1977; 1981; 1983) and Parsons (1960), who acknowledge that government power is based on a combination of openness and persuasion.

Parsons (1960) argues that persuasion is used only in the implementation of policies that have been agreed upon through open and un-coerced discussion with the public. The examples of the use of persuasive language found in the speeches and press releases, however, do not bear this out. The use of vague language such as words like 'balance' and

'challenge,' and metaphors including 'everyone aboard' and 'hand in hand' suggest that persuasive language is being used by the Conservative government to encourage support for its initiatives. Likewise, the examples of legal and bargaining language identified in the documents analyzed suggests that government language is not being employed in a transparent manner insofar as the linguistic and rhetorical techniques employed appear to function in a manner that fosters support for the government, rather than provide unbiased information in a transparent manner.

This challenges Parsons' (1960) contention that governments communicate openly with citizens because the Conservative environmental initiatives are not yet policies and they have yet to garner wide spread public support. While there appears to be evidence of the government attempting to shape the opinions of members of the public, little evidence was found of government officials actively seeking the opinions of the public. This is likely a product of the fact that the materials analyzed (i.e. speeches and press releases) typically are used to announce decisions, rather than to seek opinions.

Habermas (1977, 1981) characterizes power as including, in part, the use of strategic action.⁵⁸ The latter is important in Habermas' formulation of power because he argues that strategic action by government can prevent citizens from becoming fully aware of their interests. The examples of hortatory, legal and bargaining language found in the speeches and press releases supports the notion that the Conservative government is making use of strategic action, insofar as the use of these language types appears to be aimed at encouraging the intended audiences of these materials to support its environmental initiatives, and to oppose those of the previous Liberal government.

⁵⁸ Recall that Habermas (1981) characterizes strategic action as rational action undertaken with the intent of influencing the actions of a rational opponent.

In terms of the distinction Habermas draws between strategic and communicative action,⁵⁹ the majority of the language found in the speeches and press releases can be characterized as strategic rather than communicative action. This is a noteworthy finding because it indicates that the materials analyzed do not support the *power to* claim that political power is based on the use of open communication. Rather, the use of mostly strategic language suggests that the government is preventing citizens from identifying their interests in order to maintain their power.

Overall, the findings of this thesis do not appear to support the arguments put forth by proponents of the *power to* perspective regarding the notion that government power is a product of transparent communication between government and citizens. Indeed, the only elements of the *power to* perspective supported by the evidence presented here relate to the Habermasian notion that governments may use strategic action to keep members of the public from perceiving their interests.

5.1.2: *The Notion of Power over*⁶⁰

The predominant use of hortatory language in the speeches and press releases analyzed combined with the presence of persuasive legal and bargaining language suggests that, in these mediums, at least, language is being used in the government's environmental discourse in a manner that supports the suppositions of the *power over* school of thought.

This perspective is based upon the notion that true power allows *A* to get *B* to do something

⁵⁹ As discussed earlier in the thesis, Habermas (1981) argues that communicative action takes place when power holders are interested in reaching mutual understanding, rather than achieving selfish goals. When communicative action takes place, individual goals are pursued only to the extent that they coincide with the wants and needs of others.

⁶⁰ Recall, the notion of *power over* is defined in this thesis as an understanding power as domination.

B would not normally do. To this end, the language employed in the materials analyzed appeared to be designed to influence or shape public opinion toward supporting the current government's environmental initiatives.

As discussed above, the examples of hortatory, bargaining and legal language found in the speeches and press releases appeared to be aimed at persuading the target audience for the messages conveyed to support the Conservative government's environmental initiatives and to reject those of the previous Liberal government. This finding may be seen as a manifestation of the mobilization of bias discussed by Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963) and Lukes (1974) insofar as the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified appear to bias government communications in a way that encourages support for those in power.

While the content analysis of the speeches and press releases identified the specific linguistic and rhetorical techniques (e.g. the use of legal language, vague words, metaphors and references to bargaining) in the government's environmental discourse, what is excluded from this discourse also is particularly noteworthy. For example, the lack of information and/or discussion regarding the specific contents of the Kyoto Protocol may be interpreted as suggesting an intent on the part of the Conservative government to only engage in a debate about the merits of the Protocol on its own terms. To this end, the analysis found little to no evidence of efforts aimed at conveying information that potentially could serve to educate those who are not familiar with the Protocol.

Indeed, the act of referring only to the Protocol in name and dismissing its contents as harmful for the Canadian economy without offering more precise details about these contents is suggestive of potential government efforts to constrain – or perhaps even close off – public engagement with the topic. To this end, the examples of legal language related to the Kyoto Protocol found in the speeches and press releases support the notion that

discourses can be included or excluded from government discourses depending upon the interests of the government.

The notion of mobilization of bias as put forth by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) offers only a partial explanation of why governments may choose only to discuss issues and ideas that are beneficial to their interests. Bachrach and Baratz's formulation, along with that of Lukes (1974), does not address the specifics of how bias is actually mobilized. The evidence emerging from this thesis suggests that within the context of the Conservative government's efforts at communicating its environmental initiatives to Canadian citizens this process is steeped in nuance and subtlety.

The numerous examples of the subtle manipulation of language identified in this thesis suggest that, whether consciously or unconsciously,⁶¹ the Conservative government is using language that is deceptively simple⁶² that may be seen to encourage the intended audiences for its messages to support its environmental initiatives. In other words, while the use of apparently simple language (e.g. the word 'balance' and metaphors such as 'hand in hand') may, at first glance, suggest a 'plain-language' approach to political communication, the specific discursive techniques employed by the Conservative government and the manner in which they make use of such terms/phrases denotes deeper, more complex meanings and ideological perspectives that are not immediately apparent.

⁶¹ Recall that Lukes (1974) argues that the social norms are perpetuated both consciously and unconsciously by those in power. Edelman (1967), for his part, argues that language is not generally used consciously by elites to deceive the public. Instead, he claims that persuasive language is generally used because it helps elites do what they feel they are supposed to be doing – i.e. appeasing a public comprising a wide range of interests. Any statements regarding the extent to which the language used in the speeches and press releases is consciously or unconsciously employed to deceive the public would be purely speculative given that the research methodology for this thesis did not include any discussions with government speech writers or with those who write press releases.

⁶² Examples here include 'balance,' 'challenge,' 'call a spade a spade,' 'ecological and cultural treasures,' and 'vast storehouse,' each of which appeared to have clear meaning until deeper analysis revealed specific ideological assumptions underpinning the use of these words and phrases within the contexts in which they were identified.

Likewise, several of the words identified as being vague (e.g. taking on the *challenge* of global warming; working to *balance* the environment and the economy; and taking *real* action regarding environmental issues) appeared to function as deceptively simple descriptions of the government's actions. For example, and as was noted in Chapter 3, the word 'balance' tended to be used to lend an air of precision and objectivity to decisions that are by their nature subjective while the word 'real' served to underscore the tangibility of government actions⁶³ and/or as a jab against the previous government. At issue here is the fact that these words convey a deeper meaning that may be interpreted as suggesting that – in contrast to the official government line – the government may not view global warming with as much concern as others in the national and international community.⁶⁴ To this end, the way in which language is used in the speeches and press releases analyzed appears to correspond with Bourdieu's (1991) assertion that symbolic power is perpetuated only so long as those who participate in the power structure are unaware that it is an act of domination.

In Bourdieu's (1991) formulation of power, elites maintain their power by utilizing a style of language and rhetoric that marks them as elite and, therefore, deserving of power. He maintains that the language to which elites have access also allows them to construct reality – to some extent – by shaping the way in which the public comes to view the dominant social structure and policy issues. The manner in which the three language types identified in the speeches and press releases – hortatory, legal, and bargaining – were manifested in the materials analyzed reflects Bourdieu's assertion that elites use language

⁶³ The analysis of the speeches and press releases found little mention of specific tangible results.

⁶⁴ This suggestion is supported by the policies of the government insofar as the targets set out in the *Turning the Corner Plan*, are not as stringent vis-à-vis the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as the Kyoto Protocol.

to maintain their elite status. As discussed in the literature review, Bourdieu (1991) argues that official language is intended to form a public that is quiescent to the wishes of those in power. Those who are able to acquire positions of political power can do so because they have the ability to mobilize symbolic power to construct reality through manipulation of the social world through language. To this end, the use of persuasive language within the government's environmental discourse may be seen as being intended to foster support for its initiatives and to perpetuate the elite status of those in power.

This suggests that the way in which the three language types identified in this thesis are being employed in the speeches and press releases of the Conservative government may be seen as a manifestation of Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic power on two fronts. First, the use of language that is subtly manipulative⁶⁵ can be seen as fostering misrecognition of the meaning of language used in the environmental domain.⁶⁶ Second, the ability of government officials to use language in a strategic manner (i.e. to mobilize bias) in the environmental domain identifies the ability of the elite to utilize language to their benefit in terms of fostering support for their initiatives. This appears to support Bourdieu's (1991) assertion that symbolic power generally functions at least in part through misrecognition, and his argument that elites consistently reinforce their privileged stature through the use of specific types of language and rhetoric in order to maintain power.

Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic power is also closely associated with what he terms 'symbolic violence'. In his view, symbolic violence occurs when arbitrary expression and knowledge are imposed on social reality in order to maintain domination by one group

⁶⁵ Similar to the discussion above regarding deceptively simple language, this includes the use of words and phrases such as 'real,' 'patchwork,' 'call a spade a spade,' and 'balance' that imply a deeper meaning than may initially be apparent.

⁶⁶ Recall that Bourdieu (1991) argues that symbolic power operates in part through misrecognition, which prevents citizens from recognizing their domination by those in power for what it is.

over another. Drawing on this formulation, it may be argued that the examples of the use of hortatory, legal, and bargaining language found in the speeches and press releases and the contexts within which elements of these language-types were manifest is indicative of symbolic violence insofar as these language types were employed in a manner that appeared to be intended to foster loyalty to the government and trust in its judgment. When seen through a Boudieusian lens, the evidence from the thesis suggests that the language used by government in its environment-related discourse underscores the elite standing of those in power and that existing power structures are being perpetuated through this discourse.

The evidence from this thesis also may be interpreted as reflecting of Foucault's (1980; 1995) notion of disciplinary power. According to Foucault, disciplinary power makes use of discourses that perpetuate rules and norms. He argues that disciplinary power "'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise." The public in this case is both the object upon which power is enacted, and an instrument of the exercise of power. The individual is made the object of power through the use of disciplinary discourses that perpetuate social rules and norms.⁶⁷ Some of the language uses identified in the documents analyzed may be seen as demonstrative of disciplinary discourse. For example, the references to the Kyoto Protocol appeared to encourage opposition to it, while references to the Conservatives' own environmental initiatives, including the *Turning the Corner Plan*, seemed to be oriented toward encouraging support for these actions. Furthermore, the manifestations of bargaining language identified in the materials analyzed seemed to emphasize that the

⁶⁷ Recall that Foucault (1995) argued that these discourses normalize the presence of government and the need for the public to obey the rules and regulations established by government.

government is working to protect the public interest, even in situations that do not allow for public oversight. The bargaining language used in the environmental domain appeared to suggest that the government does not need public oversight in order to work with the best interests of the public at heart. In addition, the persuasive language identified throughout the materials analyzed⁶⁸ suggests that the environmental discourse perpetuated by the Conservative government encourages support for government programs, and loyalty to the government based on the notion that government is working for the interests of the public.

Furthermore, Foucault's (1995) argument that disciplinary power conceals itself by appearing natural also appears to be bolstered by the identification of persuasive messaging that is couched within language that appears transparent and open. This was particularly notable within the use of the marathon metaphors in relation to the Kyoto Protocol. As was noted in the discussion in the previous chapter, while this metaphor may initially appear to be a figure of speech, it also implies a negative judgment regarding the content of the Protocol. The use of such metaphors can function to conceal the perpetuation of certain points of view through the use of language that initially appears to be straight-forward. To this end, the use of the language types identified within the thesis, particularly the hortatory language, appears to support Foucault's (1995) argument that discourses perpetuated by those in power function to reproduce existing power structures throughout society.

In summary, the various manifestations of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified seemed to resonate more strongly with the ideas put forth by the *power over* perspective than those of the *power to* perspective. Specifically, the evidence from this thesis suggests that that language found in the speeches and press releases appears to

⁶⁸ Note that the hortatory and legal language appeared to function as persuasive language in the speeches and press releases analyzed.

function as a way for the Conservative government to foster support for its environmental initiatives by emphasizing government expertise and employing persuasive language that encourages support for its environmental initiatives.⁶⁹ To this end, the persuasive nature of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified suggests that the Conservative government is utilizing language in the environmental domain that is oriented toward influencing and, potentially, shaping the perspective(s) of targeted members of the public. It is in this sense that the concept of power, as proposed by Foucault (1980; 1995) and Bourdieu (1990; 1991), appears to be manifested in the language types found in the speeches and press releases.

It may be concluded, therefore, that the empirical evidence presented in this thesis appears to support the claim that the language used in government speeches and press releases focusing on environmental issues is oriented toward perpetuating the existing power structure through the use of linguistic and rhetorical techniques that submerge the ideological perspective being perpetuated and which underscores the elite nature of government officials. At a more pragmatic level, the evidence suggests that the linguistic and rhetorical techniques employed by the current Conservative government in its environmental discourse appears to contribute to the maintenance of its power by putting a positive spin on the messages conveyed in order to potentially influence and/or shape the perspectives of the target audiences for its messages.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Persuasive language here includes the legal and bargaining language, as well as the vague language and metaphors found in the hortatory language type.

⁷⁰ As noted earlier, the extent to which this is a conscious undertaking on the part of the government is not a matter that can be adequately addressed within the context of this thesis.

5.2: Persuasive Language

Despite the fact that it was first published some forty years ago, Edelman's (1967) taxonomy of language-types remains a useful resource for investigating the relationship between language and the maintenance of political power. Within the context of this thesis, his taxonomy was foundational to establishing the parameters for undertaking a content analysis of the speech transcripts and the press releases. It clearly set out the linguistic characteristics of language designed to appease the public and to build public support for government. As such, it offered a starting point for empirically examining the specific linguistic and rhetorical techniques utilized by the Conservative government to influence the maintenance of its political power, and the manner in which these techniques function. While the content analysis identified only a few examples of the use of bargaining language and no examples of administrative language, this does not in any way undermine the effectiveness of Edelman's taxonomy given the mediums that were examined. Moreover, he specifies that these particular language types are much less common in political communication than their legal and hortatory counterparts.

The persuasive nature of the language identified in the speeches and press releases analyzed supports the notion proposed by Edelman (1988) that governments use discourse to legitimize their actions. By couching their environmental initiatives in a discourse designed to present these initiatives in a positive light, and to encourage public faith in the intentions of the government, the Conservatives increase the possibility that their actions will be seen as legitimate by the general public.

The rhetorical techniques employed in the speeches and press releases also appear to support Orwell's (2006) assertion that vague language can masque content that may be unpopular with the public. As was discussed above, words such as 'challenge' and

'balance,' as well as the metaphors and legal and bargaining language identified appeared to be employed as a means of avoiding directly stating that prioritizing the environment and the economy is a subjective endeavor, while glossing over the fact that initiatives being pursued by the Conservative government to tackle global warming are not, in the eyes of some, as rigorous as they could be.

Furthermore, the findings presented in the thesis also lend credence to Orwell's (2006) notion of dead metaphors.⁷¹ Two metaphors in particular – 'call a spade a spade' and 'patchwork of programs' – were dead metaphors that implied specific judgments regarding the Liberal party to which they referred.

Two of the vague words identified in the speeches and press releases also echoed McGee's (1980) notion of the ideograph.⁷² For example, given the contexts within which they were used, the words 'balance' and 'challenge' appear to encourage the support of the government's environmental initiatives while simultaneously excusing what some stakeholders would consider to be their unacceptable shortcomings. In the case of the word 'balance', for instance, it was used 28 times in 6 speeches and 10 press releases in a manner that seemed to be oriented toward encouraging the perception of precise objectivity with regard to the way in which the government has handled the prioritization of the environment and the economy. This may be seen as an example of government using language to influence the maintenance of its power insofar as the use of the word balance in

⁷¹ Recall that Orwell (2006) asserted that dead metaphors are metaphors that are so overused that they no longer evoke vivid imagery.

⁷² McGee (1980) characterizes an ideograph as a word used in political language that represents a commitment to an ill-defined goal. Ideographs encourage behaviour that is lauded within the community, and excuse behaviour that may otherwise be considered unacceptable.

this way negates the possibility of challenging the government's actions (or lack thereof) lest those raising objections risk being accused of lacking objectivity.

Similarly, the way in which the word 'challenge' was used in the 35 times identified in 7 speeches and 10 press releases appeared to be aimed at encouraging the public to view global warming in line with the perspective held by government officials. Specifically, this word appeared to be used to downplay the threat of global warming when compared to other words that might be used (e.g. 'problem,' 'issue'). Moreover, the word 'challenge' implies that action will be taken against a perceived problem (i.e. global warming), and this implication helps to excuse the less drastic nature of the government's greenhouse gas reduction initiatives when compared to other policies at work on the international stage.

In summary, it may be concluded that the arguments put forth by Edelman (1967, 1988), Orwell (2006) and McGee (1980) regarding the notion that government language plays a large role in maintaining the power of government appears to be supported by the evidence presented in this thesis. Specifically, the findings relating to the vague language and metaphors within the hortatory language type, the legal language, including references to Kyoto apparently designed to incite opposition to this Liberal-backed plan, and the use of bargaining language that appeared to encourage trust in the intentions of the government suggest that the Conservative government is utilizing language to foster a public image of itself that encourages positive associations among the groups to which the speeches and press releases are targeted.

5.3: Language and the Maintenance of Government Power

Taken together, the findings from this thesis suggest that the Conservative government is using linguistic and rhetorical techniques within its environment-related discourse that are

aimed at influencing the maintenance of its power. More specifically, the predominant use of hortatory language techniques within the government's environmental discourse may be seen as paralleling Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic violence – i.e. the imposition of expression and knowledge on social reality in order to maintain domination by one group over another. At issue here is the finding that the function of the hortatory techniques used by the government seems to be to encourage support for the government's environmental initiatives, foster support for the current government, and opposition to the policies of the previous government, and encouraging individuals to trust that the government is protecting their interests.

It may be further argued that, as a whole, the use of hortatory, legal and bargaining language by the conservatives is oriented toward encouraging the target audiences for its environmental messages to support the government and not interfere in policy-related matters on the basis that it is working with the best interests of the public at heart. This suggests that the language employed by the Canadian government may be seen as functioning as a type of strategic action that it can use to mobilize support among members of its target audiences.

It may be concluded, therefore, that the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified most strongly support the *power over* notion of government power. To this end, the use of persuasive language suggests that the Conservative government is striving to shape the opinion of targeted members of the Canadian public with the aim of fostering support for its initiatives and quiescence regarding its leadership.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this final chapter of the thesis, the findings of the analysis of the government speeches and press releases are summarized. Following this, the limitations of the thesis and future research directions are presented. The thesis wraps up with final remarks regarding the conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis regarding the nature of government language and the way that it relates to power.

6.1: Summary of Findings

The materials presented in the thesis indicate that hortatory language was the most frequently identified language-type found to be employed in the Conservative government's environment-related speeches and press releases in the five months between August and December 2007. The types of metaphors and vague terms identified and the manner in which they were used suggest efforts aimed at persuading supporters and potential supporters of the Conservative government to view its environmental initiatives in a much more positive light than those of the previous Liberal government, especially vis-à-vis the Kyoto Protocol.

The use of legal language in the speeches and press releases also appeared to serve the purpose of fostering support from potentially sympathetic members of the public. In the speeches, for example, the negative aspects of the Kyoto Protocol were emphasized in a very general manner, while in the press releases the positive aspects of the government's own environmental initiatives were accentuated. Taken together, the way in which legal language was used in the speeches and press releases appeared to be designed to gain the backing of potential supporters, and to reinforce the negative opinions of members of the public already displeased with the Kyoto Protocol and/or the Liberal government that

ratified it. A particularly noteworthy aspect of the findings regarding the use of legal language is that the evidence obtained suggests that it was not employed in the manner that corresponds with Edelman's (1967) description. Nonetheless, the ways in which the linguistic and rhetorical techniques associated with this language type were employed appears to be oriented toward functioning in a persuasive manner.

In terms of bargaining language, the evidence from the speeches and press releases appears to support Edelman's (1967) assertion that this language type is typically used in public forums to convey the notion that the government is working to protect the public interest. This suggests that the government does not need the oversight of the public in order to work for the best interests of the public.

The results of the analysis of the speeches and press releases suggest that there some differences in the how the linguistic and rhetorical techniques associated with different language types are employed in these two mediums. For example, the way in which hortatory language manifested itself differed across the speeches and press releases. Different vague words and metaphors were identified in each medium, and the frequency of use of various linguistic and rhetorical techniques also varied across the mediums. For example, while 'challenge' and 'balance' were the most frequently identified vague words in the speeches, they were used much less often in the press releases.

Differences between the two mediums also were identified in terms of how legal language was used. In the speeches, the emphasis was on the environmental policy of the previous government, notably its ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. References to the Protocol were vague as to exactly what the Protocol entailed, and the language surrounding this edict seemed to be designed to foster a negative perspective on the Protocol and the previous Liberal government. In the press releases, on the other hand, legal references that

emphasized the environmental policies and initiatives developed and/or endorsed by the current Conservative government were identified. These legal references tended to be more detailed than the references to the Kyoto Protocol in that they elaborated upon the content of the edicts being discussed. These references also appeared to be designed to encourage positive views of the government's environmental initiatives. To this end, while the legal language identified in the press releases tended to be less vague than that used in the speeches, it appeared to be just as persuasive.

Overall, the language types identified in the speeches and press releases seemed to be designed to serve a persuasive purpose. More specifically, the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified appear to be intended to foster support for the current government's environmental initiatives and opposition to the previous government's policies. It may be argued, therefore, that the Conservative government appears to be using language in its environmental discourse that is oriented toward maintaining its political power. It is to this issue that our attention turns in the next chapter.

6.2: Limitations of the Thesis

There are four limitations to the thesis that potentially have implications for the veracity of the conclusions presented. The first relates to the primary methodology employed – e.g. content analysis. The issue emerging from content analysis is that a reliance on quantitative data constrains the ability of researchers to address questions of meaning and context. In order to offset this issue discourse analysis was used to interpret and discuss the ways in which the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified were employed within the context of the speeches and press releases.

Second, and related to the notion of quantitative analysis, is the use of representative samples. The samples used in this thesis were not chosen randomly. Instead, all government speeches and press releases on the topic of the environment produced by government agencies between August 2007 and December 2007 were collected as samples. While random sampling is “most likely to yield a sample that truly represents the population” and is therefore considered the most accurate method (Neuman, 2006, p.353), the sampling utilized in the thesis was felt to be sufficient for the needs of the exercise given that this is exploratory research.

The use of a single coder to analyze the selected materials by hand is a third limitation. Hand-coding typically involves the use of more than one coder in order to offset the potential for bias and human error in the coding. However, this was not the case for this thesis given that a thesis is meant to be an individual undertaking. As such, the author undertook all coding. Nonetheless, reliance on results obtained from only a single coder does not invalidate the results obtained. Rather, it provides the basis for establishing a pattern of language use through an exploratory study. The reliability of the results may be further investigated in larger-scale studies utilizing multiple coders.

In terms of the content analyzed, this thesis focused only on the environmental discourse of Canada’s current government. The examination of one type of discourse is, in turn, being used to generalize regarding government power more broadly. This may be seen as a limitation because government power encompasses a wide range of issues, departments, and initiatives.

6.3: Future Directions

Future investigations of the question of how language influences the maintenance of government power may benefit from expanding the limited number of language strategies identified here, and examining a broader range of words and phrases. Furthermore, the examination of a larger number of government communication materials may be beneficial in establishing the presence of further trends and patterns in the language used by government. In addition, the examination of topics outside of environmental policy (such as international relations and economic policy) may provide a broader perspective on the use of strategic language by government. This would be beneficial because it would allow for broader generalizations regarding the use of language by government.

The ongoing popularity of the Conservative government also indicates a potential area for future research. The popularity of the government has continued in spite of polls suggesting that the public does not trust Harper's environmental policy ("Good green sense," 2007). In an April 2008 poll, the Conservatives maintained a 35 per cent popularity rating, a five per cent lead on the party's main rivals, the Liberal Party (Reuters, 2008). Future researchers may wish to examine the role that government language plays in perpetuating government popularity in spite of public criticism of the government's environmental policies. Such research could be oriented toward identifying the reasons for this popularity, including other issues and initiatives through which the government has garnered support.

Finally, given that the persuasive language identified in the speeches and press releases analyzed supports notions of violence as argued by Bourdieu (1990; 1991) and Habermas (1977; 1981), an examination of the use of both physical and symbolic violence by

government over time may provide useful data regarding the power strategies employed by governments, and the changing nature of governance.

6.4: Final Remarks

The hortatory, legal, and bargaining language identified in the materials analyzed for this thesis affirms the notion that the Conservative government is utilizing persuasive language in its environmental discourse that appears to be oriented toward influencing the maintenance of its political power. Furthermore, the use of the linguistic and rhetorical techniques identified suggests that the government's environmental discourse appears to echo Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence. This supports the argument that Weber's (1971, p.28, emphasis in the original) definition of the state as consisting of "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" is still valid,⁷³ despite the fact that the nature of the violence enacted by governments may have changed.

The findings presented in the thesis may also call into question one of the founding principles of Western democracy – the ability to openly and transparently communicate through language.⁷⁴ Some scholars have argued that government communication is becoming increasingly persuasive. As Rose (2000, p.2) argues, the increased use of strategic messaging in government communication materials in Canada has raised questions regarding "how the state communicates with mass publics and the capacity of the public to understand increasingly complex institutional arrangements through the lens of

⁷³ As noted in the introduction to the thesis, this definition is still widely accepted as an accurate description of the state. See for example, Hoffman, 1995; Wolff, 1999; Goerner & Thompson, 1996.

⁷⁴ Recall that the traditional democratic vision of language characterizes it "as the organ of transparency, political power, and, in the final analysis, the advancement of universal freedom" (Hanssen, 2000, p.160).

advertising.” The concern here is that although the project of Western democracy is based on the notion that citizens have access to information which allows them to make well-founded decisions, there seems to be increasingly limited access to information that is not designed to be persuasive.

The Conservative government appears to be employing a number of the linguistic strategies described by Edelman (1967) to ensure that target audiences receive information from the government that places its initiatives in a positive light and to ensure that the public will defer to the government in discussions on environmental issues. The use of language in this manner supports the notions of power subscribed to by Foucault (1980; 1995) and Bourdieu (1990; 1991), and suggests that Weber’s (1971) definition of the state may still hold true, albeit in a more symbolic fashion than Weber likely imagined.

APPENDIX A

Press Releases

Source	Title of Press Release	Date Released
Prime Minister's Office	Canada's New Government announces the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve	August 8, 2007
Prime Minister's Office	Prime Minister Harper Raises Canadian Concerns on Trilateral Agenda at North American Leaders' Summit	August 21, 2007
Prime Minister's Office	Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Visit Australia and Participate in the APEC Leaders' Summit	August 27, 2007
Prime Minister's Office	Prime Minister Harper Urges APEC to Seek a New Consensus on Climate Change Based on Canada's Balanced Approach	September 7, 2007
Prime Minister's Office	Prime Minister Harper Unveils New Environmental Initiative	October 25, 2007
Environment Canada	Canada Calls New UN Agreement an Important First Step	December 15, 2007
Environment Canada	Government of Canada Helps Republic of Korea Clean Up Major Oil Spill	December 29, 2007
Natural Resources Canada	Canada launches clean energy software	December 11, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's New Government Invests Nearly \$1 Million in Quebec's Emerging Biofuels Industry	August 21, 2007
EcoAction	The Government of Canada Announces Further Progress Under the Chemicals Management Plan	August 24, 2007
EcoAction	\$500M Fund Launched to Support Next-Generation Renewable Fuels	September 12, 2007
EcoAction	Unique Community a Model for a Greener, Healthier Canada	September 13, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Calls for Accelerated Phase-Out of Ozone Depleting Substances	September 14, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Receives UN Award for Ozone Protection Leadership	September 17, 2007
EcoAction	Saskatchewan producers take steps to improve the environment	September 20, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Contributes to Major International Agreement to Protect the Ozone Layer and Tackle Climate Change	September 22, 2007
EcoAction	Energy Ministers' Conference: Collaborating on Canada's Energy Future	September 25, 2007
EcoAction	Biofuels, Organic Sectors in P.E.I. to Benefit from New Government Funding	September 28, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Joins Major Economies to Advance Post-	September 28,

	2012 Climate Change Agenda	2007
EcoAction	ecoAUTO Rebate Program Application Form Now Available	October 1, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's New Government Invests in Largest Wind Energy Project in the Province of Quebec	October 2, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's New Government Gives \$5M Boost to Biofuels Sector	October 4, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's New Government takes action to improve the health of our oceans	October 5, 2007
EcoAction	Governments and Industry Take Action to Advance Clean Coal Technology	October 12, 2007
EcoAction	SDTC Portfolio Reaches \$1 Billion in Cleantech Funding - \$30.3 million in new funding approved for 14 companies	October 25, 2007
EcoAction	Alberta farmers do their part to improve the environment	October 26, 2007
EcoAction	Awards recognize excellence in energy efficiency	October 29, 2007
EcoAction	Federal Government invests in the Alberta biodiesel industry	November 6, 2007
EcoAction	Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act proclaimed	November 7, 2007
EcoAction	Government of Canada Invests in Canada's Largest Wind Energy Project	November 8, 2007
EcoAction	Government of Canada Taking Action to Protect the Health of the Gulf of Maine	November 8, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's Leadership in Hydrogen Technology Honoured at World Energy Congress	November 14, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's Environment Minister Welcomes the Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	November 17, 2007
EcoAction	Government of Canada Invests in Clean Solar Energy	November 19, 2007
EcoAction	One year after launch, Canada's Chemicals Management Plan is on track and delivering results	November 20, 2007
EcoAction	Government of Canada Takes Landmark Action to Conserve Canada's North	November 21, 2007
EcoAction	Canada's Environment Minister Meets with Indonesian Special Envoy on Climate Change	November 22, 2007
EcoAction	UN Ranks Canada in Top 5 Best Places to Live – Canada Continues to Deliver Leadership on Climate Change	November 27, 2007
EcoAction	Industry Awards Honour Achievements in Energy Efficiency	November 27, 2007
EcoAction	Renewable Fuels Bill Clears the Way for Renewable Fuel Content	December 3, 2007

EcoAction	Government of Canada Calls on Industry to Participate in New Biofuels Initiative	December 3, 2007
EcoAction	Baird and Eminent Advisors to Chart Canada's Course at UN Climate Change Conference	December 3, 2007
EcoAction	Drivers, Stop Your Engines: Idle-Free Quiet Zone Launched at Truck Stops	December 4, 2007
EcoAction	List of 2008 Model Year Vehicles Eligible for the ecoAUTO Rebate Program	December 7, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Takes Action to Help Developing Countries Fight Climate Change	December 10, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Supports UN Principles for New Climate Change Deal	December 10, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Leading by Example: Baird Announces New Funding for Adaptation on Climate Change	December 10, 2007
EcoAction	Government of Canada Gets Tough on Climate Change: Orders Industry to Submit Air Emissions Information	December 12, 2007
EcoAction	Canada Demonstrates Commitment to UN Clean Development Mechanism	December 13, 2007

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