

# **MINORITY GOVERNMENTS IN CANADA: A STUDY OF LEGISLATIVE POLITICS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite their prevalence, the study of Canadian minority governments has been the object of few published studies. In particular, the issue of how governments that must rely on the support of one or more opposition parties in Parliament manage to remain in power (viability) and pass their legislative proposals (effectiveness) has not been thoroughly investigated. This study examines the parliamentary dynamics at play in these situations by applying a majority building framework grounded in and supported by three theoretical perspectives, namely the rational choice tradition, new institutionalism, and the role of party politics and party systems, to four minority governments that have occurred in the last 50 years or so: 1- Diefenbaker (1957-1958), 2- Pearson (1963-1965); 3- Clark (1979-1980); and, 4- Harper (2006-2008). The data on the specific circumstances that held during these minority governments has been gathered from archival records, from the recorded debates and votes in the House of Commons, from previous Canadian studies on minority government, from political autobiographies, and from third party accounts of the events at the time. The study finds that majority building is a function of primarily two interrelated variables: 1- bargaining power (interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion) and 2- agenda control (House business, confidence tests, other institutional features). It also stresses the importance of government concessions as an effective means of achieving desired goals and outcomes. Furthermore, this study highlights the capacity and skill of individual parliamentary actors in the exercise of legislative politics generally and in manipulating institutional and party system levers specifically, as a contributing factor to their government's duration and legislative output. This study adds to the empirical knowledge of the minority experience in Canada and provides a conceptual framework to better understand legislative politics and its impact on the success of minority governments in Canada and elsewhere.

## RÉSUMÉ

Malgré leur fréquence, les gouvernements minoritaires au Canada n'ont pas souvent fait l'objet d'études. En particulier, peu d'attention a été portée à la question de comment un gouvernement minoritaire réussit à obtenir l'appui d'un ou de plusieurs partis d'opposition dans le but de rester au pouvoir (viabilité) et de faire passer ses propositions législatives (efficacité). Notre étude examine les dynamiques parlementaires qui se déploient dans ces situations. Plus précisément, elle cherche à les comprendre à la lumière d'un modèle de stratégies menant au consensus sur un vote parlementaire. Ce modèle est fondé sur trois perspectives théoriques, soit la tradition du choix rationnel, le nouvel institutionnalisme et le rôle de la politique partisane et du système de partis. Nous étudions quatre gouvernements minoritaires des cinquante dernières années : 1- Diefenbaker (1957-1958), 2- Pearson (1963-1965), 3- Clark (1979-1980) et Harper (2006-2008). Nous avons accumulé nos données sur ces gouvernements minoritaires à partir de documents d'archives, de la transcription des débats et des votes à la Chambre des communes, d'études canadiennes sur les gouvernements minoritaires, d'autobiographies politiques et des souvenirs de tierces parties présentes lors du déroulement des événements que nous étudions. Notre étude identifie deux variables liées à la création de majorités législatives au Parlement, soit : 1- le pouvoir de négociation (la dynamique entre les partis et la cohésion à l'intérieur des partis) et, 2- le contrôle de l'agenda parlementaire (affaires découlant de la Chambre, les motions de confiance et d'autres facteurs institutionnels). De plus, elle identifie l'importance des concessions gouvernementales dans l'atteinte de ses objectifs. Notre étude souligne l'importance de la capacité et du doigté des joueurs parlementaires particuliers dans l'exercice de la politique législative en général et dans la manipulation des composantes institutionnelles et partisans en particulier pour garantir la longévité et l'efficacité de leur gouvernement. Notre étude contribue à ajouter à notre connaissance de l'expérience minoritaire au Canada et nous offre un modèle nous permettant de mieux comprendre la politique législative et sa contribution au succès des gouvernements minoritaires au Canada et ailleurs.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| CCF | Co-operative Commonwealth Federation |
| CPC | Conservative Party of Canada         |
| LPC | Liberal Party of Canada              |
| MP  | Member of Parliament                 |
| NDP | New Democratic Party                 |
| PC  | Progressive Conservative             |
| PMB | Private Members' Business            |
| SC  | Social Credit                        |
| SFT | Speech from the Throne               |

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The first sentence of The Canadian Democratic Audit on legislatures reads: “Legislatures, and the men and women who serve in them, are at the very heart of Canadian democracy” (Docherty, 2005, p. 3). To be sure, legislatures are key democratic institutions where elected representatives give binding assent to measures of public policy on behalf of the electorate. By doing so, “they confer legitimacy on a particular measure of public policy” (Norton, 1998, p. xiii). The fulfillment of this task, as well as others, has rendered these institutions worthy of study and has attracted much scholarly attention which has resulted in a substantial body of literature.

Historically, studies on legislatures have focused on their formal structures and functions – what legislatures do and how they operate (Kornberg, Falcone, & Mishler, 1973, p. 5). Over the years, more prominence has been given to measuring the tangible outputs of legislatures and examining the legislative behaviour of political actors. More recently, greater interest has been given to issues such as representation, responsiveness, governance, inclusiveness, and participation (Docherty, 2005). However, an area of study that has been rather neglected is the intricacies of legislative politics, most notably in the Canadian political context.

Broadly speaking, legislative politics refers to the formal and informal interactions between political actors, individually and collectively, in a democratic, representative, and deliberative assembly (i.e., legislature). The scope and nature of the interactions between these actors are often shaped by their expressed goal(s) and desired outcome(s), not to mention their ability to achieve them. Practically speaking, legislative politics refers to the strategies, practices, and tactics used by political actors to get what they want in a legislative or parliamentary context. This interplay between parliamentary actors is the primary interest of our study. More specifically, our focus is on the dynamics of minority governments in Canada at the federal level – governments led by a party with less than half the seats in the House of Commons (House).

We have chosen to focus our study on minority governments primarily as they illustrate very clearly the issues involved in legislative politics. As noted by Strom (1990), parliamentary governments must fulfill two essential requirements: a *viability* requirement, which refers to the necessity of winning votes of confidence, “since a defeat on such a vote typically ends the government’s ‘life’” (p. 5) and an *effectiveness* requirement where governments must regularly be able to produce legislative majorities for their legislative bills. Fulfilling these requirements and adhering to the majority principle of parliamentary responsibility is a relatively straightforward task when a single party holds a majority of the seats in the legislature. However, this is not the case in a minority situation when no single party

has a majority of seats. The performance of a minority government will therefore have to face new challenges and adopt new behaviours.

In other words, the skilled operations of legislative strategies in these minority governments will impact directly on this government's ability to achieve viability and effectiveness as defined. This issue of building legislative majorities through the use of legislative politics to ensure viability and effectiveness goes to the heart of the challenge facing minority governments. By their very nature, minority governments deviate from the norms of parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster model of majority rule (Lijphart, 1984). Indeed, it is precisely this difference that interests us.

In addition, the study of minority governments is also of interest for two further reasons. First, is the existence of minority governments in parliamentary democracies. In Western Europe, minority governments are as much the norm as any other type of government (Laver & Schofield, 1991). A seminal study on minority governments conducted by political scientist Kaare Strom (1990) showed that 35.1% of the governments produced by Western European and Commonwealth parliamentary democracies between 1945 and 1987 were minority governments (p. 59).

In Canada, at the federal level, there have been 12 minority governments since Confederation.<sup>1</sup> Nine of those minority governments have occurred in the last 50 years or so during 18 general elections. Half of our general elections since 1957 have resulted in minority governments, due in large part to the rise of protest and regionally-based parties and the decline of traditional parties (Marchildon, 2006). Canada's most recent minority government was elected on October 14, 2008. This minority government is Canada's third consecutive minority government since 2004. Minority governments have become frequent occurrences and this is likely to remain so in the near future due to the state of Canada's party system (Carty, Cross, & Young, 2000). Many have argued that minority governments are the new norm in Ottawa (Cross, 2009; Flanagan, 2009).

Yet, despite the frequency of minority governments in Western parliamentary democracies in general, and, in Canada in particular, there remains significant gaps in the literature. This brings us to the third reason explaining why we have decided to focus our study on this phenomenon.

As noted by Strom (1990), "There is no rich literature on minority governments per se" (p. 9). The political literature of the West is normally coalition-centric with a

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<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie King's government of 1926-1930 was not included in this count. Although the Liberal Party of Canada under King's leadership was unable to win a majority of seats in the House of Commons on election night, it was able to govern as a majority with the support of the Liberal-Progressives who were "Liberal in everything but name" (Beck, 1968, p. 187). See Appendix A for a complete list of Canada's 12 minority governments.

strong game-theoretic leaning. According to Kumar (2004), “Political scientists have shown more concern for statistical notations rather [*sic*] to the dynamics of politics....Much of the thrust of the Western literature is on the niceties of coalition building and its maintenance” (p. xx).

In Canada, scholarly interest in minority governments is even more scant. The seminal article on minority governments in Canada, which will be discussed later, dates back to 1964 (Forsey, 1964). Overall, minority governments have been the object of few published studies and important gaps remain in our understanding of how they operate.

These three reasons explain our interest in legislative politics and our focus on non-majority governments in general and minority governments in Canada in particular. Our present investigation is motivated by the desire to further our understanding of the impact of the absence of a legislative majority on executive-legislative relations, interparty cooperation, and intra-party dynamics, and, in the process, identify factors that influence the duration and legislative output of minority governments in Canada.

Our literature review is limited to unified (or fused) parliamentary government, which is the predominant form of government among democracies of Western Europe and the Commonwealth. The empirical study is that of minority federal governments in

Canada and seeks to answer the following question: **What factors determine the success of a non-majority government that must rely on the support of one or more opposition parties in its legislature to remain in power and pass its legislative proposals?**

The main contributions of this thesis are that it adds to the empirical knowledge of the minority experience in Canada and provides a conceptual framework by which we can understand legislative politics and its impact on the success of minority governments in Canada and elsewhere. This framework is applicable to other minority governments at the provincial level in Canada and to other Westminster-style parliamentary democracies.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

There is not one specific body of literature that allows us to answer our research question. However, there are a number of studies originating from different literatures that bear on this issue and can inform our discussion. To this end, we will draw upon two main sources: Western European studies and Canadian legislative studies. While these studies focus on different aspects of minority and coalition governments, they approach the broader subject of building legislative majorities primarily from the following perspectives: 1- the rational choice tradition; 2- an institutionalist approach; and, 3- the role of party politics and party systems.

This literature review is therefore divided into two parts. First, we will begin by reviewing the Western European literature on non-majority governments. Second, within the field of Canadian legislative studies, we will review the few Canadian studies specifically dealing with minority government.

#### **I Western European Literature**

Western European studies within the three perspectives involved in building legislative majorities in non-majority governments tend to fall into two broad

categories. The first category includes studies on coalition government (a cabinet<sup>2</sup> which is made up of two or more parties).<sup>3</sup> Western European countries have a rich history of forming coalition governments in minority situations. As noted by Russell (2008), “Among European parliamentary democracies, coalition governments have been the most common form of government” (p. 79). As a result, there exists a rich literature focusing on government formation and maintenance.

The second category includes studies on minority government per se. Authors who have studied these governments have, for the most part, come to very similar conclusions. First, that minority government occurs frequently (Strom, 1990). Second, some systems are more disposed towards minority government than others.<sup>4</sup> Third, despite their frequency, minority government has not always been viewed in a positive light. Historically, majority government was seen as the norm and authors set out to explain minority government as an “aberration” explained as “a consequence of political instability, conflict, and malaise” (Strom, 1990, p. 237). However, this analysis was very limiting in its scope because it did not provide any real explanation of why some minority governments were more successful than others in advancing their policy agendas. At best, these accounts of minority government provided a taxonomy (Laver & Schofield, 1991). As we will see, a more comprehensive account of minority government had to await the development of

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<sup>2</sup> In coalition literature, the terms “cabinet” and “government” are used interchangeably to mean “that part of the executive branch that is responsible to parliament in parliamentary systems” (Strom, 1990, p. 6n).

<sup>3</sup> Coalition governments can be of the minority or majority variant.

<sup>4</sup> See Strom, 1990, pp. 239-243 for a discussion on the type of party systems that foster minority government.

policy-driven interpretations not only of government formation but also of government performance.

Indeed, according to the Western European literature on minority and coalition governments, how governments survive and succeed are questions of government performance (Strom, 1990). However, Western European researchers have focused their scholarly interests primarily on issues of formation<sup>5</sup> of minority governments while paying scant attention to issues of government performance (Grofman & Van Roozendaal, 1997). As noted by Strom (1990), "If the literature on the causes of minority government formation is meager, there has been even less research on performance" (p. 17). Those studies that have focused on government performance have generally revolved around two criteria, namely, stability (viability) and legislative effectiveness (D'Alimonte, 1978, as cited in Strom, 1990). It is important to note that these two criteria have not always been studied separately and independently, but often one has been used as an indicator of the other.

With regard to the first criterion specifically, stability (viability), it has been generally studied using two measures: durability and termination (Grofman & Van Roozendaal, 1997). As noted by Warwick (1994),

If one accepts that the length of time governments survive strongly affects their ability to govern effectively, then it follows that our

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<sup>5</sup> For one such study on minority government formation, see Herman and Pope (1973).

understanding of parliamentary democracy depends very much on the explanation of this variation. (p. xi)

This literature focuses primarily on three approaches: 1- the critical events approach, which has interpreted government terminations as responses to exogenous events or shocks (Browne, Frendreis, & Gleiber, 1984, 1986); 2- the structural factors approach, which emphasizes the effects of cabinet, party system, and regime characteristics on cabinet stability (Warwick, 1994); and, 3- a strategic interaction approach, which seeks to provide a behavioural explanation of the processes that lead to cabinet termination in the bargaining incentives that individual parties face (King, Alt, Burns, & Laver, 1990).

As for the second criteria, legislative effectiveness, this literature is frankly inadequate. In fact, there exists no systematic cross-national study of the legislative effectiveness of minority governments (Strom, 1990). Rather, studies have focused on specific elements, such as: the negative consequences of minority rule; the importance of support agreements; and, the “effective” decision point in legislatures. Researchers who have studied legislative effectiveness often measure it by the proportion of legislative initiatives of the executive that are approved by the legislature (Cheibub, Przeworski, & Saiegh, 2004).

We will now discuss Western European research on coalition and minority governments in the context of the three theoretical perspectives we mentioned

earlier (i.e., rational choice, new institutionalism, and party politics and party systems).

### *Rational Choice*

Rational choice methodologies are based on a “rational” calculation by political actors and parties. The underlying logic supporting this approach is that “rationality” assumes a choice among a set of ordered preferences by actors or a group of actors (i.e., political party). How and when a choice is made to opt for one outcome over another is largely dependent on the combined effect of the individual’s or party’s assessment of the opportunity costs resulting from that decision.

One author who has used this framework to study minority governments is Kaare Strom. His book *Minority Government and Majority Rule* (1990) is one of the rare stand-alone studies devoted entirely to the question of minority government formation and performance in parliamentary systems of government.<sup>6</sup> His basic thesis is that the decision of parliamentary negotiators not to form a majority government is based on a rational calculation by political parties. While Strom’s analysis is best understood as a cost-benefit model, it also focuses on institutional and political party factors, such as the ability of the opposition to influence governmental policy, the salience of the electoral contest, responsiveness of the

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<sup>6</sup> This book is based in part on previous research undertaken by Strom: see Strom 1985, 1986.

electoral system to voter preferences, and fractionalization and polarization of interparty cooperation (J. D. Robertson, 1991, pp. 907-908).

Within the rational choice tradition, a broad approach commonly known as coalition theory represents one of the preferred perspectives of Western European researchers in explaining the phenomenon of non-majority governments, in particular coalition governments. According to Bogdanor (1983), coalition government is a specific type of government and needs to be understood as such “with its own conventions and rules, all flowing from the fundamental principle of power-sharing” (p. 264). Given this, the purpose of coalition theory is to provide rigorous explanations and predictions as to the formation of this particular type of government.<sup>7</sup> While existing studies on the politics of coalition government use different methodologies, such as the case study approach and comparative European politics, studies using game theoretical methodologies are perhaps the most relevant to the topic at hand given its explanatory capacity and exportability (Laver & Budge, 1992).

These studies tend to focus primarily on the motivations of political actors, in particular, party leaders. “How do party leaders make decisions on behalf of their organizations? What trade-offs do they face, and how do they resolve them? What are the constraints under which party leaders operate, both within their parties and

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<sup>7</sup> See Lijphart (1981) for a discussion on the major coalition theories.

in their larger environments?” (Müller & Strom, 1999, pp. 1-2) This approach assumes that the answer to these questions depends on three basic and interrelated motivations – the desire to control the prerequisites of office (office-seeking party), the desire to fulfill policy objectives (policy-seeking party), and the desire to maximize votes (vote-seeking party). The choices made by party leaders to reach their priorities are influenced by many complex and interdependent factors, including organizational and institutional factors as well as situational determinants and the type of party system within which they operate (Müller & Strom, 1999).

Rational choice and game theorist authors have been criticized for paying too much attention to the self-motivated factors that influence political actors and their decision-making and for not paying enough attention to the context and setting in which these individual decisions are made. To address this limitation, many researchers have adopted an institutionalist approach, focusing their studies on the rules, structures, and norms of parliamentary institutions. The institutionalist approach, in particular its “new” institutionalist variant, has proven useful in understanding and explaining the behaviour of political actors under minority conditions.

### *New Institutionalism*

According to Przeworski (2004), “the theory of ‘new institutionalism’ consists of two propositions: 1) ‘Institutions matter’: they influence norms, beliefs, and actions;

therefore, they shape outcomes; and 2) 'Institutions are endogenous': their form and their functioning depend on the conditions under which they emerge and endure" (p. 527).

Although there are a number of different streams of thought contained within new institutionalism, they are concerned with the same fundamental approach to politics. They all share a common concern with the structures of the public sector (Peters, 1996) and how institutions develop and influence political outcomes (Steinmo, Thelen, & Longstreth, 1992).<sup>8</sup> New institutionalism rejects the notions that institutions are a reflection of societal forces and that they are purely instruments that can be readily manipulated by actors (Lecours, 2005).

As argued by Lecours (2005),

New institutionalism puts forward the idea that institutions represent autonomous forces in politics, that their weight is felt on action and outcomes. It suggests that political analysis is best served by taking institutions as the starting point. Or, methodologically speaking, new institutionalism advocates using institutions as independent or, at least, key intervening variables. (p. 8)

The new institutionalist approach can be useful in helping us better understand the institutional and strategic factors that shape executive-legislative relations, interparty cooperation, and intra-party dynamics in non-majority situations. First, new

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<sup>8</sup> See Peters (1996) for a more detailed discussion on the different varieties of new institutional theory and what differentiates these versions of the "new" institutionalism from the older versions of institutionalism.

institutionalism as a theoretical model allows us to make international comparisons. “From the spatial/cross-national perspective, the idea is to explain why common events, processes or socio-economic situations lead to different outcomes in different countries or regions” (Lecours, 2005, p. 14). Second, new institutionalism, and in particular the “structural institutionalism” stream, has focused on the influence of political institutions on governmental effectiveness defined as government capabilities (Weaver and Rockman, 1993). Lastly, a more general version of the structural approach to institutions discusses political institutions, in the broad sense, as a collection of “veto points” defined as “points in the decision chain at which an actor can prevent action” (Peters, 1996, p. 212). This approach is commonly known as “veto players”. One author who has written on this topic is George Tsebelis.

In the introduction of his book titled *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, Tsebelis (2002, p. 2) summarizes the basic underlying assumptions and concepts of this model.<sup>9</sup> He basically argues that in order to change policies (i.e., change the legislative status quo), a certain number of individual or collective actors have to agree to the proposed change. These actors are called “veto players”. There are two types of veto players: those specified by the constitution and those generated by the political system. They are called institutional veto players and partisan veto players respectively. Policy stability is the term used to express the difficulty for a significant change of the status quo. Policy stability increases in general with the number of veto players and with the ideological distance that separates them. That

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<sup>9</sup> This book is based in part on previous research undertaken by Tsebelis: see Tsebelis, 1995, 2000.

is to say the greater the number of veto players and the greater the ideological distance between them, the more difficult it is to change the status quo because of the increased lack of cohesion and agreement. Veto players who have control over the policies that replace the status quo are called “agenda setters”. Tsebelis (2002) concludes by stating: “If we know the preferences of veto players, the position of the status quo, and the identity of the agenda setter (the sequence of moves of the different actors), we can predict the outcome of policymaking process quite well” (p. 3). This perspective will allow us in our discussion to go beyond party leaders to examine the role and influence of other important parliamentary actors, such as House leaders in the creation of consensus.

Tsebelis is not the first or the only author to attempt to integrate the rational choice and institutionalist paradigms. For example, Scharpf (1997) adopted an actor-centered institutionalism framework based on

...the assumption that social phenomena are to be explained as the outcome of interactions among intentional actors – individuals, collective, or corporate actors, that is – but that these interactions are structured, and the outcomes shaped, by the characteristics of the institutional settings within which they occur. (Scharpf, 1997, p. 1)

Others who have chosen different labels to describe the same fundamental idea include: “institutional analysis and development” (IAD) framework (Ostrom, Gardner, & Walker, 1994); “actor-system dynamics” (ASD) (Burns, Baumgartner, & Deville,

1985); and “situation-structural” (Michael Zürn, 1992) (as cited in Scharpf, 1997, p. 36).

While these authors attempt to explain the behaviour of political actors within an institutionalist perspective by emphasizing the rules, structures, and norms of governmental institutions, others put the role of party politics and party systems at the heart of their analysis.

### *Party Politics and Party Systems*

As we have noted, the nature of the interparty arrangements that are in place play a key role in determining the survival and success of non-majority governments. Some authors have conducted studies devoted to the issues of government survival and stability while emphasizing the role of party politics and party systems. For example, Dodd (1976) explains the variation in cabinet durability among modern parliaments by putting forward a broader theory of cabinet formation and maintenance where he combines two schools of thought: 1- the school that emphasizes the influence of the parliamentary party system on cabinet durability, and 2- game-theoretic models. He concludes that there are three party-system variables that play a determining role in affecting coalition formation and maintenance: polarization, fractionalization, and stability (Dodd, 1976).

In an earlier study, authors Taylor and Herman (1971) tested a series of hypotheses about the influence of the party system on the stability of governments and found that there exists a fairly strong relation between government stability and the fractionalization of the parliamentary system (p. 37). Their main finding can be summarized by the following statement: “the more ‘split’ the opposition...the more stable the government” (Taylor & Herman, 1971, p. 35).

Others, such as Bowler, Farrell, and Katz (1999) have examined the joint problems of cohesiveness and discipline in multiparty parliaments. These authors investigated what goes on inside parliamentary parties in terms of the formation of intra-party consensus and leadership support. Their conclusion:

Party competition more generally understood can also be seen as one of the factors shaping party cohesion and discipline. Competitive pressures – the fear of losing (a majority or a vote) and the hope of winning – can promote a powerful concentration of attention. (Bowler et. al., 1999, p. 13)

Yet others such as Warwick (1994, 1998) have adopted an ideological approach to explain the factors that determine how long governments survive in parliamentary democracies. He identifies two competing approaches that explain cabinet duration: the ideological diversity approach, which stresses the destabilizing effects of intra-coalition policy conflict, and the bargaining complexity approach, which highlights (often with the help of cooperative game-theoretic models) the instability resulting from the multiplicity of coalition options. His bottom line: The most important

determinant of cabinet duration is the ideological cohesion within governments and not the number of parties participating in the coalition.

Finally, given that governments take place in highly competitive environments characterized by bargaining, compromise, and cooperation, there exists a rich literature on the role of opposition parties with regard to their role in influencing government policy. For example, Helms (2004) examines political institutions and the democratic process but from the opposition's point of view. Based on Robert Dahl's 1966 seminal study on patterns of opposition in Western democracies, Helms (2004) presents and discusses key models of institutionalizing political opposition at the constitutional level. More specifically, he studies the impact that specific institutional arrangements may have on the strategies and successes of opposition parties.

### *Summary of Western European Literature*

Although the body of knowledge coming from Western European studies that focus primarily on minority governments is somewhat limited, it does allow us to make some general observations. First, studies on the politics of coalition government have stressed the rational calculation of political parties and actors based on three basic and interrelated motivations: office-seeking, policy-seeking, and vote-seeking. They have also stressed the influence of intra-party competition on interparty parliamentary cooperation. Second, neo-institutional literature has insisted on the

role of institutional norms in shaping actors' preferences and strategies related to collaboration. Third, some authors have stressed the role of party politics and party systems as a determining factor in explaining government survival and stability. As these research perspectives are not mutually exclusive, some researchers have used combinations of two or all three in their studies. For example, some research using the policy-driven approach to interpreting coalition and minority government behaviour integrates the rational choice and institutionalist paradigms.

There is one further observation that is common to the three theoretical perspectives we are working from. The evolution of the study of minority governments has followed a similar path to that of the study of coalition governments: first as a deviation explained by office-seeking motivational factors and then as a norm with a focus on policy-driven explanations.

While these observations speak to the general principles of government formation, maintenance, and termination when no single party commands a legislative majority, they are not sufficient to explain the dynamics of the interplay of specific players when majority building in non-majority situations. To do this, we will draw on the literature on this phenomenon in the Canadian political context.

## II Legislative Studies in Canada

The second body of literature that will allow us to answer our research question is commonly referred to as legislative studies. In this area of study, Canada's preeminent representative institution, the Canadian Parliament, is the central object of study. Indeed, Canada has a relatively strong tradition of studying the Canadian Parliament, which is based on the Westminster model of parliamentary government.<sup>10</sup> Much research has been conducted on its core activities and functions, such as lawmaking, accountability, representation, and recruitment. This body of literature has been informative and valuable in furthering our understanding of Parliament's role, procedures, and norms. However, despite these important contributions, there remain significant gaps in the literature, in particular with regard to our understanding of legislative politics, which is at the heart of our inquiry.

As noted by political scientists Michael M. Atkinson and Paul G. Thomas (1993) in their review of the literature on the Canadian Parliament, "There is a key problem, however: our understanding of parliamentary politics remains rudimentary. A taste for description and advocacy has not led to a more enduring appreciation of parliamentary power in Canada" (p. 425).

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<sup>10</sup> Notable examples include C.E.S Franks' seminal study titled *The Parliament of Canada* (1987) and David E. Smith's trilogy devoted to Parliament: *The People's House of Commons* (2007), *The Canadian Senate in Bicameral Perspective* (2003), and *The Invisible Crown: The First Principle of Canadian Government* (1995).

In addition, while these researchers and others have identified gaps with regard to the topics being studied, gaps with regard to the approaches and perspectives being used have also been identified. As Atkinson and Thomas (1993) also point out, the definition of problems relating to study of the Canadian Parliament has never been highly theoretical. "Canada does not have a tradition of building models. Richly textured description is preferred to theoretical elegance, and a concern for process takes precedence over a concern for outcomes" (Atkinson & Thomas, 1993, p. 424).

While these critical observations are relevant to the study of legislative politics during majority rule, they are even more relevant to non-majority situations (i.e., minority governments). As Atkinson and Thomas (1993) concede, "With some notable exceptions...the impact of minority governments on cabinet-parliamentary relations and bureaucratic behaviour has not been thoroughly investigated" (p. 447n).

Indeed, despite their frequency, researchers have shown little interest in the dynamics of Canadian minority governments. While there are some provincial case studies<sup>11</sup> and some articles on specific aspects of minority government,<sup>12</sup> overall, there are few published studies dealing with the parliamentary dynamics under

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<sup>11</sup> For example, see Lyon (1984) for an assessment of minority government in Ontario from 1975-1981 and Black (2007) for a comparative analysis of the 1998-99 and 2003-06 minority governments in Nova Scotia.

<sup>12</sup> Hodgson (1976) explores the effects that minority government has upon the work of senior civil servants.

minority conditions at the federal level.<sup>13</sup> However, there are some notable exceptions. In this section, we will highlight these studies in order to illustrate the main theoretical and methodological perspectives used by Canadian researchers interested in the study of minority governments. We will also briefly present some of their main findings.

As a general introductory statement, we can say that the Canadian research literature does fall within the three theoretical perspectives we have already identified but, as we will show, most of the studies combine two or three of these perspectives and therefore we have not divided our literature review into three separate categories. Rather, we have chosen to end our review of the Canadian literature by presenting its findings and, in the conclusion, summarizing them in terms of their relevance to our three theoretical perspectives.

### *Canadian Studies on Minority Government*

Not surprisingly, a review of the literature reveals that scholarly interest in the issue of minority governments mirrors their occurrences through time. As the table in Appendix A shows, from 1957 to 1979 there were six minority governments. These minority governments, in particular Pearson's two minority governments from 1963-

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<sup>13</sup> The issue of Canadian minority governments is also present in what one might call "grey literature". For example, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, a quarterly review published by the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, has devoted many articles through the years to various aspects of minority government, such as efficiency, responsiveness, accountability, House of Commons procedure, and the impact of minority rule on public servants.

1968 and Trudeau's in 1972, have been the object of some scholarly attention. Studies on these governments have focused almost exclusively on parliamentary processes and behaviours. Then, during almost 25 years, from 1980 until Martin's minority government in 2004, there were no minority governments. Subsequently, this represents a relatively quiet period during which few scholarly studies were conducted on minority governments. Since 2004, we have had three minority governments and this has reignited interest in this issue. The focus now appears to be on the broader impact of minority government on the political, parliamentary, and democratic systems.

When reviewing the literature on minority governments in Canada, a good starting point is Eugene Forsey's 1964 seminal article on minority governments.<sup>14</sup> Using current and historical sources, such as speeches, parliamentary documents, and *House of Commons Debates*, Forsey demonstrates that minority governments in Canada are not exceptional and abnormal, they are not necessarily bad, and they do not have to be short-lived. Rather than viewing minority governments as problematic and threatening, Forsey sees them as an opportunity and a promise; an opportunity to restore some of the lost power of the House and of individual members and an opportunity for Canadians to examine their system of government, to "learn about it, think about it" (Forsey, 1964, p. 10).

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<sup>14</sup> Although Forsey is interested in shedding some light on the issue of minority governments in Canada, he broadens his discussion to include the experiences of other Commonwealth countries as a basis of comparison.

While David Falcone's 1974 study also focuses on the parliamentary process, including the governmental, policy, and legislative activities of minority governments since 1957, his diagnosis of minority government differs in some regards from that expressed by Forsey in 1964. On the one hand, he differs from Forsey in that he hints that minority government may be damaging to the performance of Parliament. On the other hand, he agrees with Forsey that minority governments do not have to be weak arguing that the question of the comparative weakness of minority governments is bound up with the question of their decisiveness and their capacity or willingness to survive. Finally, Falcone concludes that minority governments are not necessarily less responsive or effective arguing that they are distinctive only with regard to their processes and not their outcomes.

In the 1970s, a number of studies on minority governments were published. However, instead of focusing on the parliamentary process, they focused primarily on parliamentary behavior. One such example is Allan R. Gregg's 1974 master's thesis (M.A.), which studies Pearson's two minority governments in the 1960s. Through analysis of recorded divisions in the *House of Commons Debates* from May 1963 to March 1968, Gregg examines party cohesion, attendance, alliances, and support for the government. He argues that the stability of these Parliaments is due to 1- opposition support for government in bloc or through individual cross-over votes and 2- insufficient membership turnout by the opposition parties upon crucial divisions. He concludes that these specific findings are valid indicators of the operation of minority Parliaments in general.

Another M.A. student who devoted his thesis to examining the ways in which the condition of minority Parliament affects the attitudes, norms, and behaviours of political parties in the House is Vernon Peter Harder (1977). He concluded that while party strategy and behavior were significantly altered during the minority Parliament, the institutional norms associated with the Westminster model of competition remain strong.

A final example of a Canadian study on minority government focusing on parliamentary behaviour, but this time with a particular emphasis on responsiveness, is Linda Geller-Schwartz' 1979 article titled, "Minority Government Reconsidered".<sup>15</sup> In this article, Geller-Schwartz (1979) examines the legislative role of the House to determine whether it changes during minority governments in Canada and, specifically, whether the cabinet has been obliged to become more responsive to the House. Her analysis challenges the unqualified assumption that minority governments are necessarily more responsive to the House than majority governments. Her study confirms previous findings (Falcone, 1974; Forsey, 1964) that a minority government's legislative performance and responsiveness significantly depend on its use of parliamentary strategies and tactics.

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<sup>15</sup> This article appears to be based on her Ph.D. thesis titled *The Multi-Party System and Parliament: A Study of the Interrelationship in the Canadian House of Commons* (1977).

However, Geller-Schwartz' (1979) biggest contribution is perhaps her identification of five modes of cooperation among parties in non-majority situations. They range from a coalition, a formal pact, an informal understanding, *ad hoc* majorities on each issue, and opposition restraint while the governing party acts as though it has a majority (Geller-Schwartz, 1979, p. 68).<sup>16</sup>

One notable study that stands out for its original approach to the study of minority governments in Canada is Peter Dobell's 2000 study. Using an institutionalist approach, Dobell examines whether and to what degree changes made in the past 30 years to the rules of procedure of the House might lead to novel challenges to the controls that minority governments have exercised in the past. He finds that the two variables that benefited the most from the rule changes of the last 30 years are private members' business and parliamentary committees. He argues that backbench Members of Parliament (MPs) from all sides of the House could potentially see their influence on the legislative process increase dramatically. Dobell also makes the following observations:

...the degree of stability of minority parliaments is a function of the relative numbers of seats held by the government party and by the different opposition parties, the relationship between the various parties, the leverage that minority parties might acquire by supporting the governing party and the assessment of each party as to how it would fare in a new election. (p. 9)

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<sup>16</sup> It is not clear whether this taxonomy originates with Geller-Schwartz. However, it is clear that many authors have since used this taxonomy, or variants of it, when discussing minority governments in Canada.

Also, compared to majority Parliaments, he observes that minority Parliaments have a different effect on 1- the dynamics with the governing party, 2- the interactions between the governing party and its supporting party or parties, 3- the dynamics with the major opposition party, and 4- the interaction between ministers and MPs, including government, supporting, and opposition members. In short, there is more intra-party cohesion and discipline and more interparty cooperation.

Two recent studies have focused their attention on the effect of minority government on the political system. First, in earlier 2008, Peter H. Russell published a book titled *Two Cheers for Minority Government*. In this book, the author endorses minority government, with some reservations, and makes a plea for deliberative democracy which emphasizes the communicative processes of democracy rather than the simple power of numbers.<sup>17</sup> Second, in an published essay titled “Minority Government in Canada: The Stephen Harper Experience”, author Howard Cody (2008) conducts a review of the effect of minority government on the Canadian political system and discusses both the strength and weaknesses of the Canadian approach in dealing with minority government practice.<sup>18</sup> He basically argues that Prime Minister Harper derives advantages from his minority position and the plurality electoral system. Also, he puts forward the notion that “Harper might further his cause better in his FPP [first-past-the-post] minority than with a majority

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<sup>17</sup> Russell’s historical review of Canada’s minority governments in Chapter Three, where he highlights their strengths, weaknesses, failures, and achievements provided useful background information for the purpose of our study.

<sup>18</sup> While the author uses Harper’s first minority government (2006-2008) as a case study, his interest is much broader. He focuses on the standardization of political party systems, governing practices, and political structures in Western democracies.

or in a different electoral system; moreover, the circumstances of his minority afford him an opportunity...to effect far-reaching changes to Ottawa's domestic and foreign policies" (Cody, 2008, p. 28).

The final Canadian study worthy of mention is truly in a class of its own. While Canadian researchers have tended to not use coalition theory, the notable exception is Ian Stewart's 1980 case study of Trudeau's 1972 minority government. Stewart employs coalition theory as an analytical tool to explain the strategies and actions of the various actors in the 1972 case. He concludes that the unidimensional models employed by most coalition theorists are inadequate to account for the behaviour of all relevant political actors in this case. He also concludes that the following Canadian federal political institutional norms of parliamentary behavior were observed in 1972, thereby influencing the conduct of all three parties: 1- "Canadian federal parties have not used coalition governments to resolve minority stalemates" (p. 452); 2- "The leading federal party, in terms of seats, has possessed a moral, if not a constitutional, right to govern" (p. 454); 3- "The governing party has always survived the initial parliamentary tests of confidence" (p. 455); 4- "Minor parties have always provided the initial voting support to sustain a government; the two major parties have never sustained each other in office" (p. 455); and, 5- "By virtue of their expedient nature, the Liberals have possessed an advantage over their Conservative foes" (p. 456).

### *Summary of Legislative Studies in Canada*

In this section we have reviewed the scholarly works on minority governments in Canada. While these studies are few in number, taken together they are informative and further our understanding of this phenomenon in the Canadian context. While the Western European literature is coalition-centric, Canada's study of minority governments situates itself in the field of legislative studies, with the Canadian Parliament at the heart of the studies. Canadian authors have combined two or three perspectives when studying the specific issue of minority governments. However, unlike the Western European studies, researchers have not used coalition theory to analyze minority governments, with the exception of one author.

Based on the main findings of the Canadian studies on minority government, we can underline the following lessons from the literature, each of which can be understood in the context of one or more of the three theoretical perspectives we have identified:

- (1) Parliament's dissolution and the timing of an election are intrinsically tied to a party's assessment of its potential for electoral gains. (rational perspective)

(2) A minority government's legislative performance and responsiveness significantly depend on its use of parliamentary strategies and tactics. (primarily the rational perspective)

(3) The nature of the interparty arrangements plays an important role in determining the duration of tenure. Governments that are capable of relying on a single partner in the legislature and that can strike a more or less formal agreement to support their agenda will last longer and have a more secure tenure. (combination of the rational and party system perspectives)

(4) Patterns of parliamentary cooperation significantly depend on how parliamentary actors interpret and adhere to institutional norms of parliamentary behaviour. (institutional perspective)

(5) Intra-party cohesion and discipline are key to a minority government's survival and success. (party system perspective)

Through this literature review of the main theoretical perspectives both in Western Europe and Canada that bear on the issue of the success determinants of non-majority governments, broad patterns emerge. In light of this, the available research allows us to conclude that the success of non-majority governments can be largely

determined by a mix of these perspectives: 1- strategic factors, such as each player's calculation of his electoral prospects; 2- institutional factors, especially the nature of parliamentary procedures and norms and how they are adhered to; and, 3- structural factors, such as the inter and intra interplay of the different parties that make up Parliament.

Our analysis also reveals that the available research does not satisfy our inquiries in that it fails to flesh out the more specific processes and activities that underscore these strategic, institutional, and structural factors. There remain significant gaps in the research in explaining the parliamentary considerations, strategies, and tactics used by minority governments to ensure their survival, in understanding how parliamentary actors interpret and adhere to institutional norms of parliamentary behaviour, and in integrating interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion. This is especially true of the Canadian experience with minority government.

Unlike its Western European counterparts, the norm for Canadian minority governments has been to rely on legislative coalitions or parliamentary alliances and not ministerial coalitions (i.e., coalition cabinet) to survive and pass their legislative agenda. Therefore, what is needed is a more in-depth analysis of the practices and strategies of minority governments in Canada that have impacted directly on their success as governments.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH PLAN**

As highlighted by our review of the relevant literatures, a key component of studying legislatures is the notion of legislative politics. Theoretically, legislative politics can be discussed and analyzed in the context of the three perspectives we have thus far been discussing. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a framework that allows us to represent the operationalization of the three theoretical perspectives within the context of minority government success or, in other words, how these governments manage to fulfill their viability and effectiveness requirements.

To that end, this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, we will develop the theoretical framework by which we can explore the legislative dynamics at play and their impact on the success of minority governments in Canada. This will lead to the formulation of our hypothesis in part two. Finally, in part three, we will present the methodological approach that will allow us to carry out our analysis.

#### **I Theoretical Framework**

In unified (or fused) parliamentary systems, the executive is responsible to the legislature (Diermeier & Merlo, 2000). This means that in parliamentary regimes,

governments must at various moments produce legislative majorities in order to survive confidence votes and pass their legislative proposals. While this is a relatively straightforward exercise for a majority government, this is not the case for a minority government, which must rely on the support of one or more opposition parties to fulfill these requirements.

In Canada, the norm has been for minority governments to rely on temporary parliamentary alliances and not ministerial coalitions (i.e., coalition cabinet) to survive and implement their legislative agenda. Using Geller-Schwartz' (1979) five modes of executive-legislative cooperation (coalition agreement; formal agreement; informal agreement; *ad hoc* majorities; and, minority governing as a majority), we note that at the federal level in Canada, the latter two modes have been the preferred chosen courses of action. Indeed, there have been no coalition governments, nor any formal agreements on cooperation between parties.<sup>19</sup> Exceptionally, there was an informal understanding between the Liberals and New Democrats between 1972 and 1974. Instead, minority governments in Canada have systematically used the looser form of cooperation that Geller-Schwartz (1979) refers to as “*ad hoc* majorities”, where the government builds legislative majorities on an issue by issue basis, and the mode in which parties cooperate the least, which is characterized by “opposition parties acting with restraint for fear of

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<sup>19</sup> The only federal coalition government in Canadian history, Robert Borden's 1917 Unionist Government, was due to the wartime emergency and not the result of a minority parliamentary situation.

precipitating an election in which they expect to lose seats, and the government acting as though it had a majority” (O’Neal, Bédard, & Robertson, 2008, p. 20).

Therefore, minority governments in Canada have had to build legislative majorities in the House to secure the requisite number of votes to survive confidence motions and pass their legislative agenda. How did they go about doing this? What was the nature and scope of their interactions with the opposition parties? What strategies and tactics did they use? We need to develop a majority building framework that will help us provide answers to these questions. More specifically, we need to develop a theoretical model that will allow us to explore the relationship between the actions of parliamentary actors in a minority government situation and the government’s fulfillment of its constitutional functions, namely its viability and effectiveness requirements.

As supported by the literature review, our theoretical framework is grounded in three fundamental and interrelated perspectives about political behaviour and majority building. The first refers to the assumptions put forward by the rational choice and game theorists who state that political actors are rational actors; that coalition<sup>20</sup> politics is strategic, manifesting itself as a game between political parties (Müller & Strom, 2000). In the language of rational choice and game theorists, the choice of a

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<sup>20</sup> Given that the Canadian way has been to not invite members of other parties into cabinet, the term “coalition” is used broadly to mean a temporary legislative alliance of distinct political parties or individual MPs for action, which usually entails passing or defeating a specific bill or motion in the House.

particular course of action over another will depend on the parliamentary actor's assessment of the real political cost associated to that decision. In short, parliamentary actors' actions are guided by rational calculations that seek to maximize benefits.

For policy-seeking parties, the desire to fulfill policy objectives may encourage them to reach out to political opponents to seek compromise and consensus on major issues to see their broad legislative agendas through. Conversely, this same desire may push them to be strategic and Machiavellian and use any and every political machination at their disposal to implement, by stealth if necessary, their policy agenda. Situations may even require an openness to both approaches. In the image of Janus, parliamentary actors may be required to be skilled negotiators at times and manipulative operators at others.

For office-seeking parties, there is a real possibility that they will attempt to put an end to the parliamentary session to call a general election if they perceive an opportunity to increase their seat count (ideally into majority territory). Obviously, such actions would have a direct negative impact on a government's duration.

The second perspective guiding our framework is the institutionalist position that coalition politics is institutionally conditioned and goes beyond the personal factors

identifying individual players and their intrinsically motivated behaviours; that the impact of their actions and choices are shaped by a set of standards, norms, limitations, and conditions imposed upon them by the overarching political system and government structure within which they function.

Thus, we can further apply this perspective more locally to the central object of our study: Parliament. Through the institutionalist lense, Parliament should in theory be viewed as the great equalizer because all parliamentary actors are subject to the same institutional rules, procedures, and norms, thereby creating a level playing field. However, the reality is that the governing party with all the levers of power at its disposal is in a much stronger position than the opposition parties. As argued by Malloy (2004), “Executive-legislative relations in Canada have long favoured prime ministers with strong legislative powers even by Westminster standards” (p. 206). Therefore, viability and effectiveness will vary depending on how parliamentary actors interpret and adhere to institutional norms of parliamentary behaviour and how they use parliamentary strategies and tactics.

Finally, the third perspective on which our framework is founded recognizes the vital role played by political parties and political systems in shaping the interparty and intra-party dynamics in Parliament.

Parliamentary actors do not exist in a political vacuum. They operate within well-defined political structures. The first structure includes political parties: organizations made up of individuals who share certain expressed principles and values. These organizations have their own particular rules governing such things as membership, leadership, organization, policymaking, and financing. Their internal dynamics are often shaped by such factors as cohesion, discipline, and leadership.

The second structure includes a party system that is defined by the number of its component parts and the level of competition between them during a particular period. The scope and nature of their relationships will depend greatly on their relative strength in terms of the number of seats in Parliament, the policy distance that divides them, and the objectives each one is seeking: office, policy, or votes.

In sum, the exercise of majority building is strategic, institutionally conditioned, and shaped both by party politics and party systems. Consequently, our interest lies in how these three perspectives interact in influencing or determining a minority government's viability and effectiveness.

One author who has written on this key issue of majority building is Kaare Strom. His work is based on cross-national comparative research. He compares the

performance and the functioning of minority governments to majority governments. However, he tends to focus more on formal agreements (“contracts” or “external support agreements”)<sup>21</sup> between coalition partners forming a government, as opposed to legislative *ad hoc* coalitions or alliances, which is the focus of our study. Strom (1990) refers to these *ad hoc* coalitions as “shifting majorities” and defines them as governments that “build their legislative majorities from issue to issue with whatever party [would] demand the fewest concessions” (Strom, 1990, p. 97).

In part, Strom (1990) seeks to answer the following question: How do minority governments manage to build legislative majorities for their policy programs? He argues that majority building strategies can be ordered along two dimensions.

The first dimension is the consistency of the membership of the government’s legislative coalition. Minority governments without a comprehensive support agreement constantly need to build legislative majorities. The degree to which they can count on reliable and compatible partners to vote with them on key votes is crucial to their survival and legislative output. According to Strom (1990), the degree of membership consistency can vary from formal agreements to *ad hoc* coalitions. While the latter strategy leaves the government with maximum flexibility to exploit favorable issue opportunities, it also renders it particularly susceptible to defeat. Between these two extremes, there is a wide variety of bundling strategies

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<sup>21</sup> Characteristics: (1) formalized (explicit); (2) comprehensive in policy terms; and, (3) more than short-term in duration (Strom, 1990, p. 97).

open to minority cabinets. For example, “governments [could] cement support from a specific set of parties in a narrow issue area for a long period of time, or on a broad range of issues for a short period of time....Minority governments thus face choices along different dimensions of aggregation” (Strom, 1990, p. 97-98).

Within this dimension, Strom (1990) argues that differences in membership consistency are largely a function of two factors. The first is the government’s bargaining power.

For minority governments seeking legislative coalitions, bargaining power is maximized when (1) a large number of possible coalitions that satisfy their legislative demands exist, (2) membership in these coalitions is dispersed across a large number of opposition parties, and (3) these parties are close to the government in policy space (p. 109).

Simply put, the greater the number of possible coalitions, the lesser the dependence on any one opposition party. Moreover, the more compatible these partners are with regard to policy, the better off the government is.

The second factor that affects the degree of the consistency of coalition membership is the government’s capacity to control the legislative agenda. Since the government can choose the timing, framing, and presentation of issues put before the legislature, it is better positioned to make determinations with regard to the level of cooperation and compromise required to ensure a successful outcome.

According to Strom (1990), the institutional features that affect the government's control of the agenda are, namely, investiture requirements and the structure of legislative committees. With regard to the former, in some countries (e.g., Israel, Belgium, and Italy) a new cabinet, especially one made up of two or more parties, has to appear before the parliament in order to obtain the so-called investiture vote (Diermeirer & Van Roozendaal, 1998). The purpose of this vote is for the legislature to confirm in office the newly formed governing coalition.

The second dimension Strom (1990) identifies as defining majority building strategies is the policy content of government concessions to support parties. In building legislative majorities, minority governments have to be willing to offer concessions to the parties they court. Such concessions may take a variety of forms, depending on what the government has to offer and what support the parties want. Strom (1990) postulates that:

The policy content of government concessions is shaped by three general factors: (1) the relative availability of different forms of benefits, such as policy influence, constituency services, and office benefits; (2) the relative value placed on these various benefits by the governing parties; and (3) the relative demand for different benefits by the parties whose support is sought (p. 111-112).

In other words, policy content is affected by supply as well as demand conditions. Finally, the differences in demand depend on the organizational features of political parties and the institutional characteristics of the political system.

Strom's analysis on majority building strategies can serve as an excellent starting point and base from which to develop a broader theoretical model on majority building. However, Strom's discussion fails to account for significant characteristics particular to the Canadian political context. Before we can proceed to the development of a comprehensive majority building model that can account for Canadian minority governments, these particular characteristics must be fully described. These characteristics are Canada's party system, electoral system, and political system.

### *Canada's Party System*

There exists a rich literature on the evolution and development of Canada's party system. According to this literature, Canada's party system has evolved through distinct phases characterized by different patterns of party competition, leadership, and relations with government and voters (Bickerton, Gagnon, & Smith, 1999; Carty et al., 2000, 2001). According to the "systems school" theorists, the first party system dates from Confederation to the "conscription election" of 1917 and its defining characteristics are patronage politics, caucus parties, and a two-party national competition; the second stretches from 1921 to the Diefenbaker victories of 1957 and 1958 and is defined by brokerage politics, ministerialist parties, and Liberal dominance; and, the third, which runs from 1963 to the early 1990's, is shaped by new communication technologies, personal parties, and executive

federalism. The 1993 general election marks the collapse of Canada's third party system and the first step in the establishment of the fourth party system. While it may still be too early to pronounce oneself on this system, it appears to be dominated increasingly by what could be called "e-politics", the cult of the leader, and a fragmented and regionalized Parliament. These authors argue that each party system collapse is the story of the ultimate inability of the parties to respond to new challenges of participation and representation that marked various phases of Canadian history.

More specifically, "school theorists" point to the arrival of regionally-based protest parties as key transitional events between party systems, leading to a major political realignment. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, it was the farmers' movement and the creation of the Progressive Party; in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was the electoral breakthrough of the Social Credit (SC) Party, combined with the continued success of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and its successor, the New Democratic Party (NDP); and, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was the rise of two new federal parties, the Reform Party (Reform) and the *Bloc Québécois* (Bloc). Such events, coupled with the decline of Canada's two traditional parties, results in a further fragmentation of the electorate, which increases dramatically the potential for minority rule. This phenomenon was observed immediately at the beginning of the second and third party systems and persisted until one of the two major parties regained its dominance or a minor third party saw its electoral share decline or simply disappeared from Parliament, as was the case with the

Progressive and the SC parties. As for the fourth party system, despite the presence of the Reform and the Bloc it took over a decade before minority governments appeared. Authors Carty et al. (2000) argue that the Liberal victories of 1993, 1997, and 2000 were artificial or aberrations, produced by a fracturing of the party system on the right.

In short, a critical examination of party system literature reveals that the trend towards multi-partyism and the decline of traditional parties has had an impact on the occurrence of minority governments.

While Canada has had a multi-party system since 1921, it has been governed by only two parties throughout its 143-year history, alternating between the Liberals and the Conservatives. Two-party dominance is consistent with first-past-the-post electoral systems.

### *Canada's Electoral System*

Unlike most of its Western European counterparts, who use some type of proportional, multi-tier or mixed electoral system (Golder, 2004, p. 108), Canada employs a single-party plurality electoral system, commonly referred to as first-past-the-post (FPTP). This “winner-takes-all” electoral system has defined our political culture (Shane, 2010). First, it has accentuated existing regional cleavages (Cairns,

1968) and has contributed to the development of distinct political cultures that are regionally-based (Bélanger, 2004). Second, it has tended to skew the potential rewards of a general election. Given that most Western European countries operate under some variant of a proportional representation electoral system, the allure of precipitating general elections for electoral gains is not as strong because the possibility of securing a majority is low. Therefore, the best political parties can hope for is positive gains to enhance their bargaining power vis-à-vis their coalition partners. Whereas in Canada, due to its FPTP electoral system and two-party dominance, winning a majority has traditionally been viewed, by the two main parties at least, as yielding greater rewards (i.e. a majority government).

It must be noted that Canadian politicians have traditionally regarded minority governments as a temporary interlude (Flanagan, 2009) or *une « erreur » de parcours*, (Geloso & Breguet, 2009) to be corrected shortly with a return to majority rule. One historian has described them as “pre-writ campaigns” or, more simply, lead-ups to the next general election (Duffy, 2002). This mentality coupled with the strong desire of parliamentary actors of all stripes to exercise complete power and control can be a disincentive for long-term formalized cooperation and can act as a powerful motivator for both the governing party and the official opposition seek a majority whenever favourable circumstances present themselves. As one journalist put it: “The art of minority government is engineering defeat on the most favourable terms” (Travers, 2007).

## *Canada's Political System*

The third characteristic particular to the Canadian political context, and perhaps the most important, has to do with Canada's political system: the Westminster model of parliamentary government. We have identified five issues that pertain specifically to the Canadian Parliament that can inform our discussion on the relationship between majority building on the one hand and viability and effectiveness on the other. These five issues include the Canadian Parliament's *modus operandi*, the confidence convention, the power of dissolution, the committee system, and private members' business. These need more extensive discussion in order to understand their impact on legislative politics in a minority situation.

### 1- The Canadian Parliament's *modus operandi*

The way Canada's Parliament is organized has greatly shaped the functioning of this institution, notably the interactions between parties and the behaviour of parliamentary actors. As noted by J. Smith (2003),

Certainly the House of Commons is organized in an adversarial fashion, with the government being pitted against the opposition. The government does not share power with the opposition. Instead the two sides are ranged against one another, the government proposing measures and defending them, the opposition attacking the measures and occasionally offering alternative ideas. (p. 151)

This confrontational and adversarial approach is best suited for party systems based on two-party dominance (Franks, 1987). Indeed, it is not inherently intended for

consensual politics and power sharing, which are the hallmarks of coalition government (Behiels, 2009).

Given that in Canada there are only two parties that can realistically win enough seats to form government and that the threat of an election is always present in minority situations, the state of these two parties, and, in particular, that of their leadership, is crucial. Political leaders are at both the apex and the centre of the body polity. Given that Canadian political parties are less guided by ideology than their European counterparts, political leaders play a vital role in setting the political and policy agendas for their respective parties. In particular, much has been written on the power and influence of the leader of the governing party, the prime minister (Hockin, 1971; Savoie, 1999). The role and responsibilities of the prime minister have evolved in such a way that this person is no longer seen as “*primus inter pares*” (Savoie, 1999). As noted by Aucoin (1999): “The Prime Minister is clearly much more than a ‘first-among-equals’ within the cabinet: the government is the Prime Minister’s government” (p. 113).

However, unlike the Western European literature which has focused extensively on the role of the opposition parties, much less attention has been accorded to the leader of the official opposition in the Canadian literature. In minority government situations, this parliamentary actor also plays a crucial role.

Many observers have commented that the position of the leader of her “Majesty’s Loyal Opposition” is one of the most difficult jobs in politics (Simpson, 2009). This individual must keep the government to account and provide a credible alternative to the government by projecting an image of a government-in-waiting. He/she must also ensure intra-party cohesion and discipline.<sup>22</sup> Keeping caucus members in check is not always easy without the levers of power that come with the office of the prime minister (e.g., power of appointment). How well the leader of the opposition accomplishes these difficult tasks can determine his/her willingness and readiness to fight an election. This, in turn, will affect a party’s overall mood, tone, and behaviour: whether to be conciliatory or confrontational. Conversely, the perceived strength or weakness of the official opposition and its leader can also affect the government’s approach, attitude, and behaviour in dealing with its political opponents.

Intrinsically linked to the calculation of whether or not to support the government and its agenda, or in the case of the government, whether or not to force or call an election, is the weight of public opinion. The influence of public opinion and polling on political behaviour is undeniable. Parties who can accurately read and reflect the mood of the electorate are often rewarded, whereas those who cannot, flounder.

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<sup>22</sup> See Malloy (2003) for a discussion on the patterns of Canadian parliamentary party groups relating to cohesion and discipline.

Another important parliamentary player who has also not been accorded his due in the literature is the House leader. According to J. B. Stewart (1977), “The unsung heroes of the House are the party house leaders” (p. xi). Each recognized party with representation in the House has a House leader who oversees the day-to-day business in the House.<sup>23</sup> According to the Parliament of Canada website, “the House Leaders of all the parties meet regularly to discuss upcoming business in the Commons, how long bills will be debated and when special issues will be discussed”.<sup>24</sup> This person plays a pivotal role in the well functioning of the House, especially in minority government situations “when the short-term political fate of the government rests largely in that person’s hands” (Thomas, 1982, p. 127). Journalist, author, and political commentator Jeffrey Simpson summed it up best when he wrote in 1980:

In the House of Commons especially if the Government is in a minority position, the House leader must sense the “mood” of the House, since without give-and-take between the Government and the Opposition parties, the Commons can degenerate into obstruction and bickering. The Government House leader meets formally with his opposite numbers in the Opposition parties at least once a week, and they chat each day in the Commons. The House leaders form their own small club, wherein the written rules of the Commons are adjusted by agreement among gentlemen. (p. 10)

Finally, as concluded by Thomas (1982), “Their success will depend not so much on the [new] rules as on their own political skills at negotiation and in sensing the mood of the Commons and of the country. It depends also on the support given them by their party leaders and their parties” (Thomas, 1982, p. 127).

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<sup>23</sup> A recognized party is one that has a minimum of 12 seats in the House of Commons.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/sites/lop/aboutparliament/guidehousecommons/who-e.asp>

## 2- The confidence convention

Canada does not have an investiture requirement as understood by Strom (1990), such as exists in other countries where a vote is required as the first order of business upon opening the legislature to confirm in office the newly formed coalition government. In Canada, a cabinet officially enters office once its members are sworn in by the governor general, the Queen's representative in Canada, on the recommendation of the prime minister. However, Canada does have other requirements that essentially aim to fulfill this same goal, which is to confirm the government in office. This is known as the confidence convention.

As previously noted, an essential feature of parliamentary government is that the executive is responsible to the legislature. By constitutional convention, the prime minister and the cabinet are able to exercise authority only with the consent and approval ("confidence") of a majority of the House. If the government loses the confidence of the House, it is expected to resign or seek the dissolution of Parliament in order for a general election to be held. This relationship between the executive and the House can ultimately decide the duration and legislative output of each Parliament and of each ministry (O'Brien & Bosc, 2009, p. 43).

The confidence convention is a matter of tradition that is not written into any statute or law. Indeed, there is an on-going debate amongst scholars, constitutional experts, and politicians themselves as to how the confidence convention should be

interpreted and applied in practical terms in the House (Courtney, 1982; Forsey, 1963; Heard, 2007; Lightbody, 1972). In a recent paper commissioned by the Canadian Study of Parliament Group on the role of confidence in the Canadian parliamentary system, author Donald Desserud (2006) concludes that “serious consideration of just how responsible government and the confidence convention are to operate under the Canadian parliamentary system is surely needed” (p.19).

Notwithstanding this, according to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* (O’Brien & Bosc, 2009), confidence motions are generally considered to be:

- explicitly worded motions which state, in express terms, that the House has, or has not, confidence in the government;
- motions expressly declared by the government to be questions of confidence; and
- implicit motions of confidence, that is, motions traditionally deemed to be questions of confidence, such as motions for the granting of supply (although not necessarily an individual item of supply), motions concerning the budgetary policy of the government and motions respecting the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. (pp. 43-44)

While the first two types of confidence motions are fairly straightforward and easy to understand, as are motions respecting Speeches from the Throne (SFTs) and budgets, motions for the granting of supply require further explanation. As just stated, some questions of confidence have traditionally been linked to supply procedures, commonly referred to as “the business of supply”, which O’Brien and Bosc (2009) define as “the process by which the government asks Parliament to appropriate the funds required to meet its financial obligations and to implement

programs already approved by Parliament” (p. 839). Based on the ancient tenet of parliamentary government, “which held that the Crown should respond to the grievances of the people before the people granted supply” (O’Brien & Bosc, 2009, p. 841), opposition members were historically afforded great latitude during supply proceedings to raise issues for debate and move motions, which were automatically deemed to be votes of confidence. In time, supply procedures evolved. In particular, substantial changes occurred in 1968 when a continuing order for consideration of supply was instituted for the first time on the House agenda. Another important change occurred in 1985 when the Standing Orders were permanently modified so that votes on opposition motions would no longer be automatically considered expressions of non-confidence in the government.<sup>25</sup>

Today, “airing of grievances” is achieved through what are variably referred to as “supply days”, “allotted days” or “opposition days”, when the opposition can present motions on any matter within the jurisdiction of Parliament (p. 841n). Most of these motions are votable and can be deemed confidence matters if they explicitly declare that the House no longer has confidence in the government.

Of Canada’s first 11 minority governments, five governments were defeated in a vote in the House on a clear, uncontested question of confidence. As for the six others, one government resigned on its own and the five others exercised their

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<sup>25</sup> See O’Brien and Bosc, 2009, pp. 840-849 for a historical perspective of the business of supply.

power of dissolution and called a general election. This issue, a government's power of dissolution, brings us to the third point of our discussion relating to the Canada's political system.

### 3- The power of dissolution

Intrinsically linked to the confidence convention is the power of dissolution. Under the Westminster-style parliamentary government the timing of elections is a prerogative of the prime minister. However, as pointed out by Courtney (1982), "a prime minister's request for a dissolution and for an election is not automatically guaranteed acceptance. Refusal, however unlikely, remains a possibility given the reserve power of the Crown" (p. 82). The 1926 King-Byng affair is a point in case.<sup>26</sup>

The question of dissolution is not as prevalent in formal coalition situations because coalition partners are usually bound by written agreements that clearly spell out the duration and conditions of the coalition. However, in Canada, given that minority governments have not entered into formal agreements that clearly state the length of the ministry, the issues of when and why to seek dissolution are at the heart of minority politics and can impact directly on the duration and legislative output of governments. The absence of clear rules framing the duration of ministries

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<sup>26</sup> For a complete account of the King-Byng affair, see Forsey (1943), Chapter V: "The Canadian Constitutional Crisis of 1926 (I)" and Chapter VI: "The Canadian Constitutional Crisis of 1926 (II)".

potentially leads to political brinksmanship and breeds opportunistic behaviour by political actors.

While most constitutional experts recognize the prerogative of a prime minister to dissolve Parliament and call an election, there is an on-going debate as to how quickly after a general election the governor general should agree to such a request. As put by Russell (2008), "Constitutionally, can a government call for an election in the early days of a new Parliament just to cash in on a rise in its political fortunes?" (p. 27). Historically, this question has been raised consistently whenever Canada has found itself in a minority situation. Interestingly, in her memoirs, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson (2006) tells us that she would have not allowed dissolution in the first six months of the Martin government (2004-06) had the prime minister requested it (p. 192).

In an attempt to put an end to the debate and add some certainty to the timing of elections, the first Harper minority government enacted fixed-date election legislation in 2007. However, this law did not preclude Prime Minister Harper from going to the governor general in the fall of 2008 to ask for dissolution and call a

general election. So, despite Canada's fixed-date election law, the question of the power of dissolution appears to be still on the table.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4- The committee system

A key element of Strom's analysis on majority building strategies is the structure of legislative committees as a means of controlling the agenda. Today committees are central to the operations of the Canadian Parliament but this has not always been the case. In fact, it was not until 1968 that the House agreed to a permanent restructuring and reorientation of the committee system (O'Brien & Bosc, 2009). Prior to 1968, most of the committees did not actually meet from one session to another and most House business was transacted on the floor of the Chamber, often in a Committee of the Whole.<sup>28</sup> As pointed out by Franks (1987), from Confederation to 1968, "committees were generally not active, nor were they an important part of parliament" (p. 162). This is an important consideration when undertaking a historical study of minority governments, as the government's ability to control the business of the House via the committee system has not been consistent through time.

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<sup>27</sup> During Prime Minister Harper's second minority government, which started in 2008 and is still on-going, questions have also been raised with regard to his government's use of prorogation (i.e., putting an end to a parliamentary session).

<sup>28</sup> All of the Members of the House sitting in the Chamber as a committee.

Our goal here is not to provide a historical analysis of all of the reforms introduced to the committee system since 1968. Rather, we will limit our comments to two sets of reforms adopted by the House that have had significant impact on the government's ability to control its legislative agenda. All of these reforms relate to a specific type of committee called "standing committees". O'Brien and Bosc (2009) describe them in the following terms:

Standing committees form a majority of the committees established by the House of Commons. Their authority flows from their large number (24) and the variety of studies entrusted to them, but also from the fact that they return session after session as their existence is entrenched in the Standing Orders. Composed of 11 or 12 Members representing all recognized parties in the House, they play a crucial role in the improvement of legislation and the oversight of government activities. (p. 960)

In the course of this discussion, it is important to bear in mind that party representation on these committees is roughly proportional to party standings in the House. Therefore, in a minority Parliament, government committee members are outnumbered by opposition members. In order to advance the government's interests, they must seek the support of members of other parties. This obligation is consistent with the analysis of Franks (1987), who argues that the mode of operation of committees in the Westminster-style parliamentary government is intended to be consensual by design (p. 6).

First, in the 1980's, reforms were adopted that made it more difficult for the government to control its legislative agenda, notably to give standing committees

the right to meet if and when they wish and to determine their own agendas. The idea behind making committees masters of their own destinies was to allow them to “operate under slightly different rules and conventions than the House and that one committee is not constrained by precedents set in another committee” (Massicotte & Levy, 2008, p. 8).<sup>29</sup> However, over time, especially in minority Parliaments, this principle has been expanded by some committee members to mean that a committee can do whatever the majority wants it to do. In a minority context, this often entails pursuing activities and studies that are incompatible with the government’s overall legislative agenda and/or that will potentially embarrass the government.

The second set of reforms has to do with the Chairs of standing committees and their election. In 2002, changes were adopted to the Standing Orders to provide for a secret ballot for the election of all Chairs of standing committees and to codify the longstanding practice (since 1958) of choosing the Chair of Public Accounts from the opposition (*Annotated Standing Orders of the House of Commons, 2005*). With the advent of minority governments in 2004, 2006, and 2008, five committee chairs are now chosen from the official opposition. They include the Standing Committees on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics; Government Operations and Estimates; Public Accounts; Status of Women; and, the Standing Joint Committee

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<sup>29</sup> This reference originates from an unpublished paper titled “Minority Governments in Canada and Quebec: Contrasting Experiences” presented to the Joint Conference of The Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS) and The American Council for Québec Studies (ACQS) in Quebec City, 13-16 November 2008.

for the Scrutiny of Regulations (*Committees, Practical Guide*, October 2008, p. 4). The intent of these reforms was to provide greater independence and balance in the chairmanship of House committees. However, the unintended consequence is that Chairs have more clear partisan identification, either with the government or the opposition depending on the committee.

#### 5- Private members' business

Finally, there is another institutional feature that has gradually taken on more importance and significance in the Canadian House of Commons and is germane to our discussion: private members' business (PMB). On this issue, Strom (1990) is mostly silent, preferring to focus his attention on government bills. The evolution of PMB in the Canadian context is important because it poses new challenges for governments, especially with regard to controlling the legislative agenda.

PMB consists of public bills and motions that are sponsored by private Members, rather than by the Government. "Private Members" are essentially those Members of the House who are not Ministers of the Crown or Parliamentary Secretaries. The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker are also excluded from participating in PMB. The current regime is the culmination of many changes – major and minor – to PMB over the years. Like the evolution of committees, the most significant changes to the Standing Orders with regard to PMB have occurred in the last 25 years, beginning in the mid-1980s. Prior to the adoption of these rules, PMB occupied only a small part

of the time of the House and rarely received more than a brief debate, and even more rarely was voted upon (Franks, 1987, p. 119). However, with the myriad of changes adopted over the years<sup>30</sup>, the new regime provides increased opportunities for “private members” to fulfill one of their original functions, which is to legislate. As a result, more private members’ bills have been enacted than previously was the case (Dobell, 2000: 16). It is important to note that one of the leading factors for this has been the decision by party leaders to loosen party discipline and allow their members to vote freely when it comes to PMB. In sum, as echoed by Dobell (2000), PMB has become an area that can potentially complicate the position of a minority government (p.16).

### *Developing a Majority Building Model*

Our discussion has thus far highlighted the fact that Strom’s discussion on majority building strategies does not account for the realities of Canada’s party system, electoral system, and political system. Our development of a theoretical framework that is suited to the Canadian experience integrates the Canadian reality into our framework for analysis.

In the Canadian context, majority building can be ordered along two interrelated dimensions: 1- bargaining power and 2- agenda control.

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<sup>30</sup> See J. R. Robertson (2005) for a history and evolution of Private Members’ Business in the Canadian House of Commons.

## Bargaining Power

The first dimension, bargaining power, is largely a function of interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion. (party systems and strategic actors)

The notion of interparty dynamics refers to the relationship between the various parties represented in the House. Following a general election where no single party has obtained the majority of seats, the leader of the party who has been asked to form the government must ask him/herself the following questions: Is there a large number of possible coalitions that satisfy our party's legislative demands? Is the membership in these coalitions dispersed across a large number of opposition parties? If the answer to these two questions is yes, the government's bargaining power is enhanced.

The possibility of creating successful coalitions is dependent on three factors. The first is the policy space between the government and the opposition parties or the individual members of these parties. Though Canadian political parties are less guided by ideology than their European counterparts, ideology still plays an important role. As argued by Christian and Campbell (1990), "Canadian politics is, at present, and has been, in the past, influenced by ideology" (p. 3). Second, notwithstanding ideological differences, successful coalitions can be made up of parties that share a common purpose (e.g., adopting a new distinctive national flag). The third factor is not related to ideology or common purpose, but speaks to the

self-interested nature of political actors. The openness and readiness to temporarily enter into an alliance can be a function of pure electoral calculations (e.g., desire for, or fear of, an election).

To sum up, when assessing the interparty dynamics of a newly formed minority Parliament, the key variables include ideology, common purpose, and electoral calculations.

The relationships between members within a same party are as important as the relationships between members of different parties. This is true for the governing party and opposition parties. Two concepts that are frequently used by legislative scholars when discussing intra-party dynamics are cohesion and discipline. As noted by Hazan (2003), “Although it is common in the literature to distinguish between party cohesion and party discipline, the terms are rarely delineated properly or distinguished adequately. Prominent scholars use these two terms interchangeably” (p. 2). According to this same author, one of the first scholars to define them separately was Ergun Ozbudun (as cited in Hazan, 2003, p. 2). In his seminal study, Ozbudun (1970) defined cohesion as “the extent to which, in a given situation, group members can be observed to work together for the group’s goal in one and the same way” (p. 305). As for the second concept, he defined it as “a special type of cohesion achieved by enforcing obedience or to a system of sanctions by which such enforced cohesion is attained” (p. 305). For the purpose of

our study, we will also use these terms interchangeably but we will favour the usage of “cohesion” over “discipline” when discussing intra-party dynamics, as we feel it is more appropriate to our analysis. The reason for this is two-fold. First, like Ozbudun (1970), we see discipline as an integral part of cohesion. Second, as pointed out by Malloy (2003), “strong discipline is common in Westminster-style parliaments” (p. 118) and the Canadian House of Commons is no exception (p. 117).

The task of ensuring cohesion and party discipline falls primarily on the shoulders of the leader. A party leader must ensure that he/she is in complete control of his/her caucus and enjoys its support. Strong caucus support has been linked, though not conclusively, to the leader’s overall job performance and his/her ideological views (Malloy, 2003, p. 125). Moreover, caucus opinions are often a reflection of the public’s overall impression of how well the leader is performing.

Depending on the role of the party, each leader has his/her own sets of challenges. For example, the leader of the governing party must not allow internal party dynamics to distract him/her from the ultimate goal of providing stable and competent government. The leader of the official opposition, as previously stated, must keep the government to account and provide a credible alternative all the while ensuring cohesion and party discipline. Leaders of third parties also perform an accountability function, but their ultimate goal is to remain relevant and influence

policy in order to make electoral gains in the next election as a means of ensuring the party's survival.

In short, each party leader is faced with unique pressures stemming from the party's particular role. However, a truism which applies to all of them is that if they manage to maintain strong party cohesion, they usually find themselves in a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis their political detractors and opponents, both within and outside their parties. Conversely, party leaders who are not in full control of their caucuses, who do not enjoy full caucus support, are at a greater risk of being or becoming weak, vulnerable leaders and easy prey for their opponents.

Taken together, interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion play a crucial role in determining a minority government's bargaining power.

### Agenda Control

The second dimension, agenda control, is largely a function of House business, confidence tests, and other institutional features. More specifically, it is the question of how well the governing party manages and navigates these issues that directly impact on the government's duration and legislative output. (strategic actors and institutions)

A key element of controlling the agenda is the control of House business. The government sets the parliamentary calendar (i.e., the timing of debates and votes) as well as its legislative agenda (i.e., the supply of government bills and regulatory changes). These are powerful levers. A successful government, especially a minority government, must use parliamentary norms and procedures to its advantage to ensure its survival and secure passage of its agenda. As noted earlier, the government House leader plays a pivotal role in the management of these issues on a day-to-day basis.

As previously stated, there are key moments in the life of a government where it must seek consent and approval (“confidence”) of a majority of the House. In a minority Parliament, these votes take on an added importance because of the government’s minority status. Despite the lack of consensus and clarity with regard to the confidence convention, the following three confidence tests can be easily identified and measured. The first of these tests are related to the SFT, which opens every new session of Parliament. The second is the passing of the government’s budgetary policy via its annual budget, economic updates, and other money-related bills. During SFT and budget debates, opposition parties have the opportunity to move amendments and sub-amendments to the government’s main motions. Third, during any calendar year, a certain number of allotted days are set aside for the opposition parties to bring forward issues for debate, and, if they so choose, express non-confidence in the government.

In addition to these tests, the government can expressly declare any vote (on a bill or motion) to be a question of confidence. This can be done for reasons of principle (i.e., a bill that is central to the government's agenda) or for purely tactical and strategic reasons (i.e., to force the opposition parties to support the government out of fear of the potential consequence: a general election). However, it should be noted that this type of vote is a political decision on the part of the government of the day, thus the Privy Council Office does not keep any official record compiling these votes, and, since confidence is not in a strict sense a matter of parliamentary procedure, nor does the Journals Branch of the House Commons.

There are three additional notable institutional features that can play a determining role in assessing a government's agenda control but that are only relevant to Canada's three most recent minority governments (2004, 2006, and 2008). They include the role of committees, PMB, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, fixed-date elections.

First, as previously discussed, the government does not have a majority in committees, as the membership is roughly proportional to the party standings in the House. Therefore, the government must secure the support of members from other parties to win votes and advance its agenda.

Second, recent changes to the Standing Orders with regard to PMB have made it more difficult for governments to control this aspect of House business. As pointed out by Massicotte and Levy (2008), “In a majority parliament non government bills and motions have little chance of ever becoming law as the government can use its majority to win every vote. This is not true in a minority situation” (p. 17). In a minority situation, opposition parties can drive the agenda by working together to pass bills and motions against the will of the government.

As for fixed-date elections, this measure was passed with the intent to limit the prime minister’s power of dissolution. However, despite the passage of this law, which sets the date of the next general election four years hence, the government retains its right to seek dissolution and the opposition parties retain the right to vote non-confidence if they wish to trigger an election. While debate is still on-going as to the true significance of this recent law and its impact on the government’s control of the agenda and timing of the next election, it is an institutional feature worth considering.

Together, these elements, House business, confidence tests, and other institutional features play an important role in determining a government’s agenda control.

## Government Concessions

The strength of a government's bargaining power and agenda control will heavily influence a third interrelated dimension: government concessions.

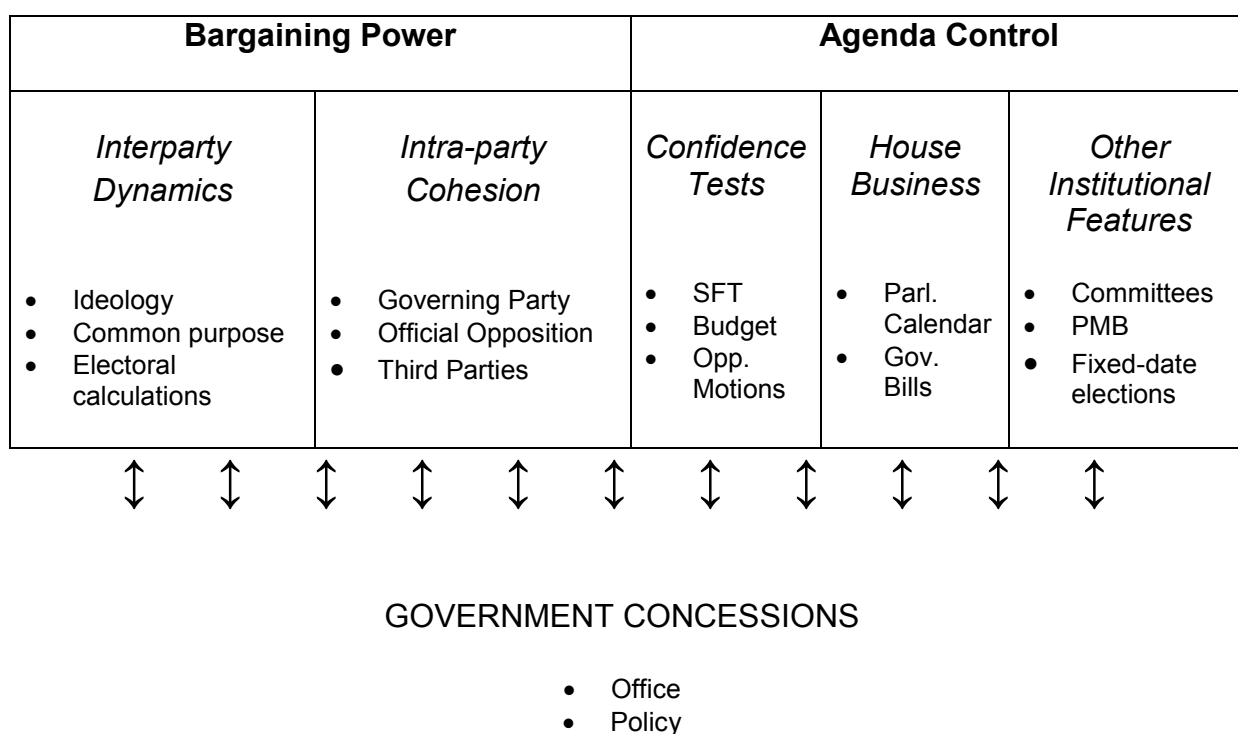
Given that Canadian political culture has favoured legislative coalitions and not coalition cabinets, opportunities to render office benefits have been less frequent, but not completely non-existent. For example, office space, additional resources, and certain recognitions can and have been used in the past in exchange for legislative support. Also, Canadian minority governments have relied on policy "goods" to secure the requisite support to advance their agendas. From the perspective of opposition parties, expectations of future electoral advantages could also come into play as a powerful motivation to negotiate and accept these concessions.

While our study does not consist of a clause-by-clause analysis of how government bills were amended at committee stage by opposition parties to make them acceptable to all parties, the general issue of concessions and trade-offs is an important one that underlies our two main dimensions: bargaining power and agenda control. The relationship between these dimensions is that the nature and frequency of office-related and policy concessions offered and made by minority governments to opposition parties in minority situations depend on, but also influence, the strength of their bargaining power and control of the parliamentary

agenda. Political actors tend to prefer to control and exercise power independently, without having to rely on other political parties. The art of compromising and making concessions is often done reluctantly. However, accepting them is sometimes a necessity in order to achieve certain goals, notably surviving and moving one's legislative agenda ahead.

The following table provides a summary of our majority building framework consisting of the variables that flow from our three theoretical perspectives.

**Table 3.1 Majority Building Framework**



## **II Hypothesis**

In answer to our research question, **it is our contention that building majorities in minority situations in Canada is a function of the relative strength of a government's bargaining power and agenda control. Minority governments that enjoy strong bargaining power and high agenda control can more easily fulfill their viability and effectiveness requirements. Conversely, minority governments with weak bargaining power and low agenda control tend not to last long or to manage to pass much of their legislative agenda. In order to strengthen their bargaining power and agenda control, minority governments can offer up office-related and policy concessions to their political opponents in the House. How well they manage this give-and-take relationship will also have a determining effect on their viability and effectiveness.**

## **III Methodology**

To carry out our analysis on how minority governments in Canada fulfill their viability and effectiveness requirements we need to operationalize these two key variables. The first, viability or government survival, will be measured by the government's durability or the length of its tenure. Duration can be measured by using different markers: from the time the writs are returned to the time the new writ is issued; from the date of the general election to the date of the next general election; or, from the time the new prime minister is sworn-in to the time he/she resigns. Duration can also be measured in terms of the length of Parliament: from the time Parliament

opens (Speech from the Throne) to the time it is dissolved. Since we are interested in legislative survival and effectiveness, we have chosen this latter measurement. More specifically, we have chosen the number of House of Commons sitting days of a particular minority government as our primary measurement of duration.

Table 3.2 presents Canada's (11)<sup>31</sup> minority governments in decreasing order in terms of the number of House of Commons sitting days. As King, Diefenbaker, Pearson, and Harper presided over more than one minority government, the number in parenthesis refers to the chronological order of these different governments. Henceforth, we will use this reference to distinguish between their different minority governments.

**Table 3.2 Duration of Canada's Minority Governments<sup>32</sup>**

| <b>PM and Party</b>       | <b>Dates</b> | <b>Number of Sitting Days</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Pearson (1) / Liberal     | 1963 - 1965  | 418                           |
| Pearson (2) / Liberal     | 1965 - 1968  | 405                           |
| King (1) / Liberal        | 1921 - 1925  | 366                           |
| Harper (1) / Conservative | 2006 - 2008  | 292                           |
| Trudeau / Liberal         | 1972 - 1974  | 256                           |
| Martin / Liberal          | 2004 - 2006  | 160                           |

<sup>31</sup> Harper's second minority government is still on-going.

<sup>32</sup> Parliament of Canada website:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/compilations/parliament/Sessions.aspx?Language=E>

|                                            |             |     |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| King (2) / Liberal                         | 1925 - 1926 | 108 |
| Diefenbaker (1) / Progressive Conservative | 1957 - 1958 | 78  |
| Diefenbaker (2) / Progressive Conservative | 1962 - 1963 | 72  |
| Clark / Progressive Conservative           | 1979 - 1980 | 49  |
| Meighen / Progressive Conservative         | 1926        | 3   |

The second variable, effectiveness, which refers to a government's ability to pass its legislative proposals, will be measured by the proportion of legislative initiatives of the executive (i.e., government bills) that are introduced in the House and approved by Parliament. Adopting this measurement will provide us with a base from which to compare the output of our minority governments.

Table 3.3 highlights, for our 11 minority governments, the total number of government bills introduced in the House (by session) and the total number of these bills to receive Royal Assent. This table is organized in decreasing order starting with the most legislatively successful minority government to the least successful. This ranking was calculated by averaging out the proportion of bills introduced that received Royal Assent (columns 4 and 5). In most cases, the proportion of bills passed in the final session that immediately precedes the end of the Parliament tends to be lower. This could be explained by a variety of factors, most of which are

directly related to the manner in which the government's life ended. This is the object of our next table (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.3 Legislative Output of Canada's Minority Governments<sup>33</sup>**

| <b>Government</b> | <b>Government Bills Introduced<br/>(by session)</b>                                          | <b>Government Bills Passed<br/>(by session)</b> | <b>Proportion (%)</b>        | <b>Overall Average (%)</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Diefenbaker (1)   | 30                                                                                           | 27                                              | 90.0                         | 90.0                       |
| Pearson (2)       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 28<br>1 <sup>st</sup> – 84                                                 | 23<br>82                                        | 82.1<br>97.6                 | 89.9                       |
| Pearson (1)       | 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 23<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> – 42<br>1 <sup>st</sup> – 41                         | 19<br>40<br>34                                  | 82.6<br>95.2<br>82.9         | 86.9                       |
| King (1)          | 4 <sup>th</sup> – 63<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> – 92<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> – 80<br>1 <sup>st</sup> – 56 | 53<br>72<br>68<br>52                            | 84.1<br>78.3<br>85.0<br>92.9 | 85.1                       |
| King (2)          | 26                                                                                           | 16                                              | 61.5                         | 61.5                       |
| Trudeau           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 35<br>1 <sup>st</sup> – 54                                                 | 10<br>47                                        | 28.6<br>87.0                 | 57.8                       |
| Martin            | 82                                                                                           | 46                                              | 56.1                         | 56.1                       |
| Harper (1)        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 62<br>1 <sup>st</sup> – 63                                                 | 29<br>36                                        | 46.8<br>57.1                 | 52.0                       |
| Diefenbaker (2)   | 33                                                                                           | 17                                              | 51.5                         | 51.5                       |
| Clark             | 28                                                                                           | 6                                               | 21.4                         | 21.4                       |
| Meighen           | —                                                                                            | —                                               | —                            |                            |

<sup>33</sup>Parliament of Canada website:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/compilations/HouseOfCommons/BillSummary.aspx?Language=E>

Since we are interested in legislative survival and output, the reason for the next general election and the circumstances surrounding the resignation or defeat of the government are key to our analysis. As previously mentioned, of our 11 minority governments, one government resigned, five governments called a general election, and five were terminated by an opposition vote. Table 3.4 presents this information and briefly provides an explanation of the motivational factors that led to this outcome.

**Table 3.4 How and Why Canada's Minority Governments Ended<sup>34</sup>**

| <b>Government</b>                                           | <b>Reason for Next Election</b> | <b>Circumstances (Motivational Factors)</b>         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| King (1)                                                    | Called by government            | Government lasted its natural course                |
| King (2)                                                    | Resigned                        | King sought dissolution: denied by Governor General |
| Meighen                                                     | Defeated on non-confidence vote | King brought Meighen down on a technicality         |
| Diefenbaker (1)                                             | Called by government            | Diefenbaker sought majority                         |
| Diefenbaker (2)                                             | Defeated on non-confidence vote | Issue: nuclear warheads (open revolt in Cabinet)    |
| Pearson (1)                                                 | Called by government            | Pearson sought majority                             |
| Pearson (2)<br>(Trudeau was PM at the time of dissolution.) | Called by government            | New leader sought a new mandate                     |

<sup>34</sup> See Russell (2008), "Chapter Three: Minority Governments by the Dozen", pp. 15-69.

|            |                                 |                                                                                   |
|------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trudeau    | Defeated on budget vote         | Orchestrated by government to seek majority                                       |
| Clark      | Defeated on budget vote         | Minority acting like majority; Liberals were leaderless                           |
| Martin     | Defeated on non-confidence vote | Opposition parties bring down government in the wake of the "sponsorship scandal" |
| Harper (1) | Called by government            | Harper sought majority                                                            |

As these tables highlight, Canada's first minority government occurred in 1921, which was followed by two more minority governments, ending in 1926. Then for over 30 years, from 1926 to 1957, there were no minority governments. Since 1957, there have been nine such governments. Obviously, we cannot analyze all of these governments. Instead, we have chosen four governments from this last period (since 1957), which will serve as case studies of legislative politics in minority situations.

Our analysis will therefore consist of applying our majority building model to four minority governments which have occurred in the last 50 years or so: 1- Diefenbaker (1) (1957-1958), 2- Pearson (1) (1963-1965); 3- Clark (1979-1980); and, 4- Harper (1) (2006-2008). These four governments have been chosen because they represent four different types of minority governments in Canada: 1- short duration / high output; 2- long duration / high output; 3- short duration / low output; and, 4- long duration / low output.

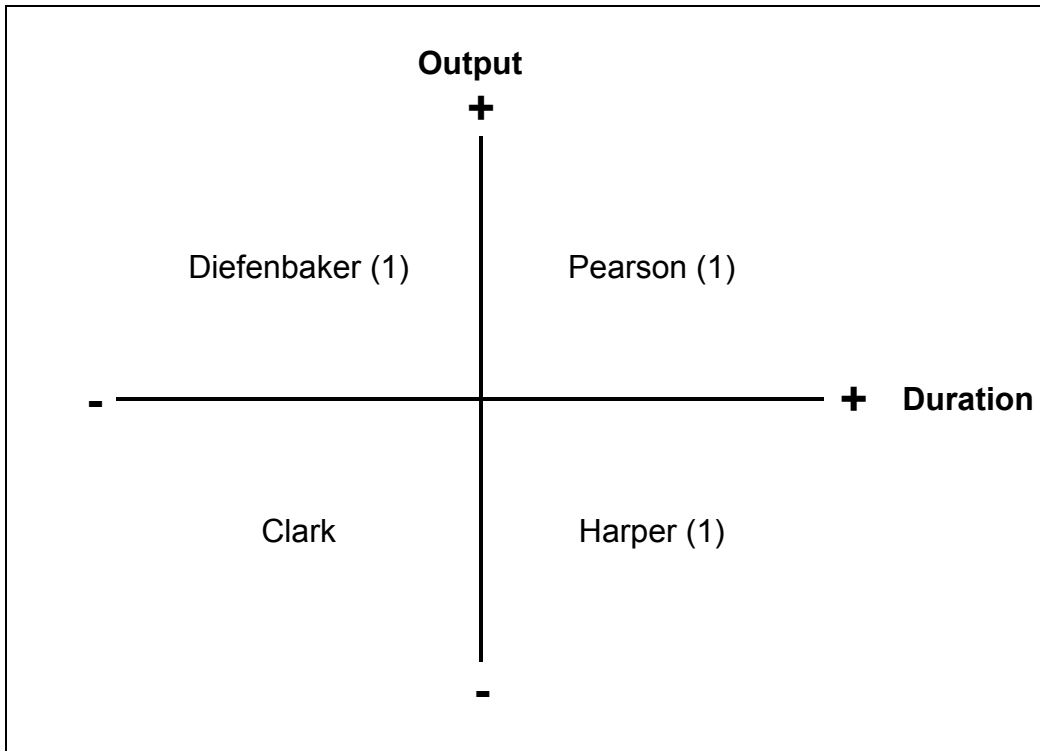
The following table (Table 3.5) provides the number of House sittings days (duration), the percentage of government bills passed (legislative output), and the type of government for each minority government we propose to study. The numbers in parenthesis in the “Duration” and “Legislative Output” columns represent the ranking amongst Canada’s 8 minority governments since 1957.

**Table 3.5     Object of Our Study**

| <b>Government</b>                                                     | <b>Duration</b><br>(House sitting days) | <b>Legislative Output</b><br>(%) | <b>Type</b><br>(Duration / Output) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Diefenbaker (1) /<br>Progressive<br>Conservative<br><br>(1957 - 1958) | 78 (6 <sup>th</sup> )                   | 90.0 (1 <sup>st</sup> )          | (short / high)<br><br>(- , +)      |
| Pearson (1) /<br>Liberal<br><br>(1963 - 1965)                         | 418 (1 <sup>st</sup> )                  | 86.9 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )          | (long / high)<br><br>(+ , +)       |
| Clark / Progressive<br>Conservative<br><br>(1979 - 1980)              | 49 (8 <sup>th</sup> )                   | 21.4 (8 <sup>th</sup> )          | (short / low)<br><br>(- , -)       |
| Harper (1) /<br>Conservative<br><br>(2006 - 2008)                     | 292 (3 <sup>rd</sup> )                  | 52.0 (6 <sup>th</sup> )          | (long / low)<br><br>(+ , -)        |

The following diagram places these four governments on a duration / output axis.

**Diagram A Duration / Output Axis**



The data on the specific circumstances that held during these minority governments will be gathered from archival records, from the recorded debates and votes in the House, from previous Canadian studies on minority government, from political autobiographies, and from third party accounts of the events at the time. We will also make extensive use of the writing of political journalists in part because of the limited amount of academic literature but also because of the interest of political journalists in legislative politics. The involved presence of established political journalists makes their printed observations relevant to our study. This will be

particularly true of Harper (1) given the recency of events surrounding his government.

One chapter will be devoted to each government identified above. The length of the chapters reflects the length of the ministries being studied because of the detailed empirical study of the governments. For example, the chapter on Pearson (1) and Harper (1) will be longer in length than the chapters on Diefenbaker (1) and Clark. All four chapters will essentially be divided into three sections entitled: Bargaining Power, Agenda Control, and Dissolution: How the Government Ended. Throughout these three sections, the issue of government concessions will be raised and discussed whenever appropriate. The following is a brief description of these three sections, including the introduction and conclusion of the chapters.

## **Introduction**

- This section will serve to set the context by providing key facts following the general election that produced the minority government.

## **I Bargaining Power**

- This section will provide a post-election analysis of the interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion of the political parties. The first part will focus on assessing the make-up of the House following the general election and during the life of the

Parliament. The second part will focus on the internal dynamics of each party as well as an assessment of the potential for legislative coalitions between parties by examining the policy space dividing them and other key factors, such as common purpose and necessity. The section will end with an overall assessment of the bargaining power of the governing party and its leader.

## **II      Agenda Control**

- The purpose of this section will be to assess the government's overall agenda control. It will primarily include two subsections: confidence tests and House business. The first subsection will focus on throne speeches, budgets, and opposition motions. The second subsection will focus on the parliamentary calendar and the government's legislative agenda. The order in which we examine these issues may vary from chapter to chapter depending on the circumstances of each minority government studied. The chapter on Harper's first minority government will also include a subsection that will look into three institutional features that posed unique challenges: committees, PMB, and fixed-date election law.

## **III      Dissolution: How the Government Ended**

- This section will explore the circumstances that led to the end of the government's tenure.

## **Conclusion**

- In the final section, we will attempt to summarize the lessons of the particular case study in relation to our hypothesis on the viability and effectiveness of minority governments in Canada.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**DIEFENBAKER (1)**  
**1957- 1958**

Surprise and disbelief are the words used to describe the national mood on June 11, 1957, as Canadians awoke to a minority Progressive Conservative (PC) government putting an end to 22 years of consecutive Liberal rule (Granatstein, 1986, p. 1).<sup>35</sup> In fact, Blair Fraser, Ottawa editor of *Maclean's Magazine*, whose magazine had been put to press before the election results were in, wrote:

“For better or for worse, we Canadians have once more elected one of the most powerful governments ever created by the free will of a free electorate. We have given that government an almost unexampled vote of confidence, considering the length of its term of office.” (as cited in Diefenbaker, 1975, p.35)<sup>36</sup>

As we now know, the magazine got it wrong. For the first time since 1935, despite the fact that the Liberals had won 2% more of the popular vote than the PCs (40.9% versus 38.9%)<sup>37</sup>, the Liberals were out and the PCs were in. According to Donaldson (1994), “there was never any doubt about Diefenbaker’s mandate to govern” (p. 191). When the final figures of the general election become known,

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<sup>35</sup> M.J. Coldwell, leader of the CCF, also makes reference to the unexpected result in his Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 53).

<sup>36</sup> See also Newman, 1963, pp. 57-58 and Russell, 2008, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Unless mentioned otherwise, all statistics pertaining to the results of general elections in this document originate from the Parliament of Canada website:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/compilations/ElectionsAndRidings/ResultsParty.aspx?Language=E>

including the armed forces vote and the result of recounts, the seat breakdown was as follows:

**Figure 4.1    Seat count of the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Election (June 10, 1957)**

|                                         |         |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|
| Progressive Conservative Party          | 112*    |
| Liberal Party of Canada                 | 105**   |
| Co-operative Commonwealth Federation    | 25      |
| Social Credit Party (all from the West) | 19      |
| Other                                   | 4       |
| <br>Total                               | <br>265 |

Number of seats required for majority = 133

\*Includes Henri Courtemanche (Labelle) who ran as an Independent Progressive Conservative and was unopposed by an official PC candidate. Shortly after the 1957 election he dropped the Independent label.

\*\*Includes William Moore Benidickson (Kenora-Rainy River) who was elected under a Liberal Labour banner. He had been a Parliamentary Assistant in Liberal governments since January 24, 1950. (Meisel, 1962: 125n)

On June 17, 1957, outgoing Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent offered his resignation to Governor General Vincent Massey and John George Diefenbaker was invited to form the government. It was Canada's first minority government in over 30 years.<sup>38</sup>

In this chapter we will apply our majority building framework to Canada's 4<sup>th</sup> minority government since Confederation: John Diefenbaker's first minority government (1957-1958).<sup>39</sup> Diefenbaker (1) represents our first type of minority government: short duration / high output. Amongst Canada's eight minority governments since

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix B for a chronology of the main events of the life of this government.

<sup>39</sup> Diefenbaker led a second minority government in 1962-63.

1957, Diefenbaker (1) ranks low on duration (6<sup>th</sup> overall with 78 House sitting days) yet ranks very high on legislative output (1<sup>st</sup> overall with a 90% passing rate of government bills).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the PCs bargaining power post-election; the second section assesses the government's control of the agenda; and, the third section analyzes how this government ended.

## **I Bargaining Power**

The use (or non use) of majority building strategies is in part a function of the strength of the governing party's bargaining power. Bargaining power is determined primarily by two factors: interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion. This section will focus on these two factors: the relationships between the various parties as well as their internal dynamics. First, we will assess the make-up of the House, the availability of potential partners, and the possibility of cooperation between parties. Second, we will attempt to provide a picture of the state of each of the parties following the general election.

### *Make-up of the House of Commons*

As noted by Nicholson (1968), at the outset, given the known ideologies of the various parties, there did not seem to be any possibility of a "coalition or overt

alliance which would command an overall majority in the House” (p. 54). Ideologically speaking, the party closest to the PC Party was the SC Party. However, their combined seats (112 + 19) fell short of the 133 seats required for a majority.

It should be noted that four candidates in the 1957 general election were elected independently of a major political party. Of these four Independents two called themselves Independent Liberals: Samuel Boulanger (Drummond–Arthabaska) and Gérard Loiselle (St. Ann). Given this label, one could assume that they would be more inclined to vote with the Liberals than with the PCs.<sup>40</sup> The other two Independents were Benoît Chabot (Kamouraska) and Raoul Poulin (Beauce) who both hailed from Quebec. Little is known about these two men other than they were both defeated in the following election.<sup>41</sup>

That said, a combination of PC, SC, and Independents (112 + 19 + 2 = 133 seats) did add up to the number required. However, a string of particular circumstances made this simple mathematical equation much more difficult to achieve.

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, voting records during the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament show that they did indeed vote with the Liberals. Both joined the Liberal Party after the 1958 election.

<sup>41</sup> Voting records show that they tended to vote with the PCs. However, on two key votes on the Address in Reply, they did not vote with the PC caucus.

First, due to the sudden death of a PC member, the Senate appointment of another, and an election (won by a Liberal) declared void, three by-elections were held between August 26 and December 12, 1957. The governing party managed to win all three, thereby adding one seat to their total seat count. However, on October 14, 1957, the opening of Parliament, Roland Michener (PC Member from St. Paul's) was named Speaker of the House and this represented one less voting member for the government.

Therefore, technically speaking, throughout most of the life of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, the Conservatives had 111 or 112 voting members at their disposal, thereby requiring them to sway 21 or 22 members from the opposition benches to vote with them to reach a majority in the House (133 seats). Given the parties' position on the left-right political spectrum, their past experiences of political cooperation, their respective policy views and the intra-party dynamics of each party, what was the likelihood of this happening?

### *The Progressive Conservative Party*

As previously noted, the leader of the governing party, the prime minister, plays a vital role in setting the political and policy agendas of his party and the government. This is true in both minority and majority situations. Governments often reflect the character, temperament, and personality of the prime minister. He/she sets the tone and gives it direction. This was especially true of Diefenbaker who one historian

described as “a radical one-man band” (Donaldson, 1994, p. 197). The following analysis will be useful in understanding not only this minority government but also the following chapter’s minority government (Pearson 1963-1965) where Diefenbaker served as leader of the official opposition.

By the time the 1957 general election was called, Diefenbaker had been party leader for just over four months. He had already spent 16 years on the backbenches of the opposition before capturing the PC leadership on December 14, 1956. (Donaldson, 1994, p. 188) It was his third attempt to win the party leadership. Despite this victory, many PCs had misgivings about his electability, suitability for the job, as well as his overall personality and leadership style.

During Diefenbaker’s third leadership bid, despite the fact that he enjoyed almost fanatical support from some, he also had to contend with bitter hostility:

It was said of Mr. Diefenbaker that he had shown himself a lone wolf who found it difficult to co-operate with his Parliamentary colleagues, that he was totally unacceptable to Quebec and distrusted by the Toronto and Montreal financial circles on which the party would depend for funds; he was accused of being unstable, not robust enough physically to carry the load imposed by the leadership, too old, hard to work with; in short the sort of leader who, at this critical juncture in the party’s history, would more likely wreck it than lead it into office. (Meisel, 1962, p. 27)

Needless to say, expectations were not high in some quarters.

Nobody in the Conservative Party expected actually to beat the Liberals in the coming election. Some thought Diefenbaker would be a risky choice as leader, and asked coded, serious questions about his “stability”, especially his fitness to deal with world affairs. But nobody with better credentials stood against him. There was a sense that John’s turn had finally come. It would probably be a caretaker leadership for a few years while the party bred a younger successor. And a real westerner with an “ethnic” name might even help broaden the appeal of a party not known for inclusiveness after the days of Macdonald. The old Tory power-brokers resigned themselves. “People want John Diefenbaker”, said one of the Ontario kingmakers, “and there is no use kicking against the pricks”. (Bliss, 1994, p.188)

In terms of his skills, Diefenbaker was a highly regarded orator and parliamentarian (Granatstein, 1986, p. 17; Meisel, 1962, p. 27). Yet despite his long tenure in Parliament and his many assets, many questioned whether he had the proper training to occupy the highest office in the land. Newman (1963) wrote:

John Diefenbaker came to the toughest job in the country without having worked for anyone but himself, without ever having hired or fired anyone, and without ever having administered anything more complicated than a walk-up law office. (p. 13)

Equally critical in his assessment of Diefenbaker’s past experiences is D. Smith (1995), who wrote:

The prime ministership was the first executive office that John Diefenbaker had ever held....Diefenbaker had run a small law office marked by informality and disorganization; he had been a token vice president of the Canadian Bar Association and an officer of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, a Kiwanian, and a mason. But he had never directed or managed anything on a national scale except the 1957 campaign – which had been, to a remarkable extent, an

emanation of his personality, shaped in combat from the platform. (pp. 248-249)

As for his personality, historians use the following descriptors: distrustful of others; unforgiving; uncompromising; a lone wolf. For example, Granatstein (1986) wrote:

Even so, the abuse he had suffered because of his origins probably helped make Diefenbaker a man who trusted few men and never forgave those who crossed him. He remembered slights and attacks for years, and he could not readily accept the Conservatives who had run against him for leader in 1942, 1948, or 1956, who had disagreed with him on issues or tactics, or even those who had loyally supported the party leaders. (p. 17)

By all accounts, Diefenbaker was not much of a team player within his caucus or in the House (Bliss, 1994, p. 188; Cook & Bélanger, 2007, pp. 382). This trait of his personality concerned many. Richard Bell, Co-Chair of the 1956 leadership convention and MP representing Carleton from 1957 to 1963 and from 1965 to 1968 stated the following in a 1976 documentary film on the Diefenbaker-Pearson years:

“There were a considerable number within the party who did not support Mr. Diefenbaker until he actually became leader. I was one of them. I was concerned about what I considered temperamental weaknesses. His inclination to fight, to quarrel rather than to placate and to mediate. This was a quality that I was concerned with: his capacity to get along with people.” (as cited in Scott, 1976)

Books on his time in office have been titled *Renegade in Power* (Newman, 1963) and *Rogue Tory* (D. Smith, 1995) but what were Diefenbaker’s true political and social beliefs?

Samuels (2002) described his ideological orientation in the following terms: “Canadian Nationalist, Red Tory, Populist, Social Progressive, Constitutional Democrat, Humanitarian” (Samuels, 2002, p. 199). For his part, Meisel (1962) stated: “By consistently and publicly defending civil rights and minority groups, Mr. Diefenbaker had acquired a Canada-wide reputation as a liberal” (p. 27). Indeed, Diefenbaker’s policies, according to Samuels (2002) were “radical and often contrary to traditional Conservative values” (p. 203). Donaldson (1994) argued that “He [Diefenbaker] distrusted all that the old guard Tories stood for – money, tariffs, free enterprise and [money]. He hated big business and Toronto’s Bay Street” (p. 197). However, most observers saw him as a “Tory”. Cook and Bélanger (2007) explained these apparent contradictions in the following terms:

His convictions on welfare and employment policy were shaped in the 1940s by his experience of the great depression on the prairies and were broadly shared by colleagues in the Liberal and CCF parties. In his approach to fiscal and monetary policy, on the other hand, he remained an instinctive conservative, never fully absorbing the lessons of Keynesian economics. (p. 382)

A close protégé to Diefenbaker, Thomas Van Dusen, who served as his executive assistant for 4 years<sup>42</sup>, echoed these same sentiments when he stated that:

His [Diefenbaker] social thinking was radical. He didn’t conceal it, nor did it ever change. It derived from his experience of the helplessness of the individual in the face of giant catastrophes – drought, dust storms, depression. He felt that in organized society the individual should be able to count on help from the state. This did not mean unwanted interference or regimentation. In a curious, inverted way, his social thinking was a

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<sup>42</sup> Mr. Van Dusen’s impressions were also shaped by his eight years of observation as a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and a ministerial assistant in the Diefenbaker government.

product of his intense feeling for the individual. The state was there to help. Woe betide the bureaucracy which did not rush to the individual's assistance when assistance was needed.

He saw no contradiction in this philosophy. He did not think the state should tell people what to do. It should, alternatively, find out what should be done and give incentives in order to get these things done. Never, on any account, should it resort to coercion or compulsion; this would represent violation of the sacred right of the individual to self-determination. People were not pawns to be pushed around by bureaucrats insulated from reality. They were dynamic entities of supreme importance in the political and social scheme, and the state existed to remove the impediments from their successful functioning. Those who could not help themselves should be helped. (1968, p. 22)

To sum up, on the one hand, given Diefenbaker's philosophical and ideological orientations, it would appear that there were many possibilities of convergence with the other opposition parties, notably with the SC Party in the economic sphere and with the Liberals and the CCF in the social sphere. (Later in this chapter, we will examine if Diefenbaker's political leanings were reflected in the government's legislative program.) On the other hand, Diefenbaker's expansive personality and his reluctance to work with others could make it more difficult to achieve cooperation and compromise as appropriate in a minority situation. The other side of the equation is the opposition parties. What was the likelihood of them cooperating with Diefenbaker and his government?

### *The Liberal Party of Canada*

The chances of the Liberals wanting to cooperate with the PCs were quite high. The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), who formed the official opposition with 105 seats, was busy with leadership issues. On September 6, 1957, over one month before the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament was due to reconvene, Louis St. Laurent announced his intention to retire. During that fall and early winter parliamentary session of 1957, until the Liberal leadership convention in January 1958, the LPC's attention and energy were focused on rebuilding and renewing the party. During that period, St Laurent continued to serve as leader, both inside and outside of the House. On January 16, 1958, Lester B. Pearson was chosen as the new leader of the LPC, and we will come back to the question of the impact of this change in leadership later in this chapter.

As for St. Laurent, the out-going leader, the 23<sup>rd</sup> general election was his third as party leader. He was first elected to Parliament in 1942 and had served as party leader since 1948. In 1957, he was 75 years of age.

According to J.W. Pickersgill (1975) who served as a cabinet minister under St. Laurent:

When the election campaign began in 1957, no one in the government expected a sweeping victory but almost everyone expected St Laurent to win an over-all majority. I knew there were many areas of irritations and

discontent with the government and there was a general feeling that twenty-two years of Liberal government was long enough. (p. 321)

During his last year in office the Liberals suffered reversals in public opinion, partly as a result of the pipeline debate in 1956 (Thomson, 1967, p. 519).

According to Thomson (1967), immediately following the 1957 general election, “Louis St. Laurent’s first and only reaction to the popular verdict was to hand over the reins of power to John Diefenbaker as promptly and in as orderly a fashion as possible.... Personally, he had no desire to give the impression of clinging to office for the sake of power” (p. 519).

However, out of respect for the members of the armed forces serving overseas, St. Laurent suggested to Diefenbaker to wait until the service vote was received before formally announcing the transition of power. On June 17, after the service vote was received, St. Laurent offered his resignation to the governor general and advised him to ask Diefenbaker to form a government.

In his final news release as head of the government, St. Laurent “assured the Progressive Conservative leader that he would extend ‘full co-operation...so that the

Queen's government can go on without interruption” (as cited in Thomson, 1967, p. 521). As noted by Thomson (1967), St. Laurent also told Diefenbaker that

he felt the Liberal members would not attempt to prevent the new government from carrying through Parliament the program it had placed before the people as “we feel that the growth and prosperity of the country should not be endangered by instability of government which would come from irresponsible obstruction” (p. 521).

As for his future in politics and as leader of his party, St. Laurent took the summer to reflect. According to Thomson (1967), by mid-August his health was becoming a matter of serious concern. On September 6, 1957, he made public his decision to resign as leader of the LPC:

“After careful consideration and in the light of medical advice....I have come to the conclusion that I no longer have the vigour and energy required to lead the party through a general election....Health permitting, however, I will be happy to continue to serve as leader of the Liberal Party pending the choice of my successor at the convention which will, no doubt, soon be held.” (as cited in Thomson, 1967, p. 525)

Clearly the Liberals were in no mood for a quick election. They were focused on leadership and renewal. In the meantime, they were prepared to support the government in fulfilling its election promises. This Liberal pledge of support will be re-examined more closely in the following section on agenda control during our discussion on the Address in Reply to the government's SFT.

### *The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation*

As for the CCF, the main party of the Left, it would appear that there was also a real opportunity for cooperation with the PCs. The reasons for this are two-fold. One, as previously noted, Diefenbaker's personal brand of Toryism and the nature of his electoral promises indicated that there were areas of convergence between the CCF and the PCs. Two, while the CCF's leadership was stable and not in question after the general election, the party and its leader's attention was elsewhere than with Parliament in the early days of the Diefenbaker government.

The CCF was founded in 1932 in Calgary as a political coalition of progressive, socialist, and labour forces. Its leader was Major James (M.J.) Coldwell. Coldwell was elected as an MP in 1935 and as party leader in 1942. The 1957 campaign was his fourth as party leader. In this election, the CCF won 25 seats (or 10.7% of the vote), which represented one seat more than when Parliament was dissolved.

Although the CCF's seat count had been steadily rising since 1949 under Coldwell's leadership, its popular vote had been steadily declining since 1945 from 15.7% to 10.8% in 1957. While Coldwell was firmly in control of his party, there were some concerns with regard to his health. On February 25, 1957, at the age of 68, Coldwell suffered his first heart attack. Coldwell campaigned during the 1957 campaign but he took advantage of the summer of 1957 to recoup and regain his energy (W. Stewart, 2000, p. 198).

It is important to note that the year 1957 marked the CCF's 25<sup>th</sup> year in existence. The party was planning celebrations to mark this occasion for the fall of 1957. As a member of the Parliamentary Association, Coldwell was invited to go to India on an extensive trip at roughly the same time and decided to go. The caucus and the party's executive were furious. Upon learning of Coldwell's decision to miss the celebrations and go to India anyway, Lorne Ingle, then national secretary of the party, wrote the following in a letter dated September 23, 1957 to CCF MP Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):

"I was absolutely flabbergasted that M.J. should take off on such a trip at one of the most crucial times that our movement has had for a long time. In the first place, this comes at a period which will see the culmination of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities and knocks into a cocked hat many of the plans we had for special radio and TV programmes, banquets, press conferences, etc. How can we make a big national whoop-de-doo about our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary when the national leader is on a Cook's Tour of India is beyond me!

The second thing, of course, and this may well be as important or more important than the first, is that he will be away for most of what could easily be the most important session of Parliament since the CCF was formed." (as cited in W. Stewart, 2000, p. 199)

Despite these protestations, Coldwell did go to India. "This led to what was probably the only occasion in his life where M.J. put his personal wants above the party – with disastrous results" (W. Stewart, 2000, p. 198). As a consequence, Coldwell was away most of the latter part of 1957 and crucial matters were neglected in Ottawa.

In short, it would appear that the focus of the party (with its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations) and the leader (with his trip to India) was elsewhere than Parliament in the fall of 1957. Obviously, the CCF was not in any hurry to force another election or fight one for that matter. Given all this, not surprisingly, shortly after the election, Coldwell declared that the CCF would cooperate with the new government in order to give the country good administration (Nicholson, 1968, pp. 52-53). It remains to be seen in the following section whether the government's legislative program did truly resonate with the CCF.

### *The Social Credit Party*

As for the smallest party in the House, the SC Party, the likelihood of cooperating with the PCs to advance the government's agenda in the House was also relatively high. First, ideologically speaking,

If the CCF was the main party of the Left, the Social Credit party must be placed on the extreme right of the traditional political spectrum. The principle underlying the party's proposed election programme were said to "demand that Government get out of business and make way for private enterprise; they re-state the fundamental belief in the dignity and God-given rights of the individual man; they denounce all government-inspired schemes to degrade man and make him subservient to the state or any monopoly". (Meisel, 1962, p. 220)

Given this, on fiscal and monetary policy, the PCs could potentially have an ally in the SC Party. However, on social policies, finding common ground could be more difficult.

Like the other opposition leaders, the leader of the SC party, Solon Low, was an experienced parliamentarian. He was first elected in 1945. The previous year, he had been acclaimed the first official national leader of the Social Credit Association of Canada at the party's founding convention.<sup>43</sup> The 1957 election was his fourth as party leader. He was obviously well established in that role and the 1957 results represented the party's best showing under his leadership. The party's seat count climbed from 13 in 1945 to 19 in 1957 and its popular vote increased modestly from 4.1% to 6.6% during the same period. As pointed out by Meisel (1962), "the SC movement seemed to be gaining momentum in Canada" (p. 18). While this statement was no doubt accurate, it is probably safe to say that the SC Party was, like the Liberals and the CCF, not keen on fighting an election soon. General elections are particularly taxing on small parties, both in terms of financial and human resources.

While Low also pledged to cooperate with the new government, as was the case with the other parties, the true level of cooperation would not be known until the government unveiled its legislative agenda in its SFT.

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<sup>43</sup> Although there had been Social Credit MPs in Parliament since 1935, the party did not have its first national convention until 1944 at which point the national party was officially founded.

## *Summary*

With regard to the Diefenbaker government's bargaining power, our preliminary analysis reveals that while not evident at first glance, Diefenbaker and the PC Party did indeed have a number of possible coalitions and that these possible coalitions could be imagined across a number of opposition parties. This was due in large part to the fact that the policy distance between the PCs and the other opposition parties, in particular the Liberals and the CCF, was narrowed due to the PC's leader's personal brand of Toryism. This ideological rapprochement would facilitate the creation of *ad hoc* legislative majorities, thereby strengthening Diefenbaker's bargaining power. However, the building of these majorities also depends greatly on another factor: agenda control.

## **II      Agenda Control**

In addition to bargaining power, majority building is also a function of agenda control. How well a government manages its House business and navigates confidence tests directly impacts on its duration and legislative output. This section will focus on the government's agenda starting with the content, debate and votes surrounding its SFT. It will also examine the government's legislative program and how it managed to pass its bills. Throughout this section the issue of policy concessions will be raised where appropriate.

## *Speech from the Throne*

On October 14, 1957, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II officially opened Parliament in person and read the government's SFT.<sup>44</sup> According to D. Smith (1995):

The speech carried forward the government's summer promises of largess. Old age, blind, disabled, and veterans' pensions would be raised; funding for provincial old age assistance would be increased; agricultural floor prices would be introduced; cash would be advanced for farm-stored grain; supplementary and married women's unemployment insurance benefits would be extended; hydroelectric power and water storage projects would be assisted on the Saint John, South Saskatchewan, and Columbia rivers; a new national development policy would promote resource exploitation; an aggressive trade policy would open up markets for Canadian products abroad. The outlook seemed benign and the government's intentions generous. (p. 270)

In reply to the government's SFT, all three opposition leaders gave lengthy speeches touching on many themes and addressing a panoply of issues. Rather than attempting to summarize all the issues raised, we have highlighted the statements made by the three opposition leaders that are directly related to assessing the level of comfort of each party with the PC agenda in order to determine the possibility of cooperation and compromise during the parliamentary session.

In his Address in Reply to the SFT on October 16, 1957, the leader of the official opposition, the Right Honourable Louis St. Laurent, was quick to point out the

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<sup>44</sup> For a first-hand account of the SFT, see *Debates*, October 14, 1957, pp. 5-6. For other third-party accounts, see Newman, 1963, pp. 103-05 and Nicholson, 1968, pp. 73-75.

commonalities between the smaller parties and the PCs with regard to promises made during the campaign:

The Conservative party was a long way from receiving a majority either of the popular vote or of the seats in parliament on June 10 last. But as far as its promises to the people are concerned, that should not be a substantial handicap to the government. Almost all of the Conservative promises were echoed by the two smaller parties represented in this house. Indeed, the most substantial difference between the Conservative party and the smaller parties in that regard is that the smaller parties were making even larger promises. (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 44)

As for the Liberals' level of comfort with the government's legislative agenda, in the same speech, St. Laurent added:

I do not intend to detain the house with a catalogue of the promises made by the Prime Minister in the recent campaign. The speech from the throne forecasts legislation to implement several of these promises. I do not refer to the sections of the speech which deal with international and commonwealth affairs. Apart for the reference to the Mont-Tremblant conference, to which I shall refer later, the rest of these sections of the speech could just as well have been put there by a Liberal government. Indeed, many of the phrases are mere echoes of earlier speeches; and I am not suggesting that they are any the worse for that. (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p 44)

While the Liberal leader was clear in his willingness to work with the government and give it an opportunity to see its agenda through, he was careful not to give it *carte blanche*. He made a point to explain how he and his party would behave in opposition:

We believe that an opposition should state its position vigorously and honestly and that it should do its utmost to persuade a majority that when

it objects to legislation, its objections are sound. But in the final analysis our view is that the will of the majority in parliament and, even more, of the majority of the country, should prevail. Indeed, our view is that a minority in parliament should not seek to obstruct the will of the majority unless the minority believes – and that may be possible at times – that there is at stake a principle of such importance to the nation that the minority should do everything in its power to bring the question before the electorate itself for a decision. (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 44)

He touched upon this issue again at the end of his speech and reiterated how he envisaged the functioning of this minority Parliament:

We believe the proper function of an opposition which hopes and expects to be in office again is to be fair and frank with the public, to criticize the government vigorously, and to advance alternatives to the policies followed by the government, but not to seek to usurp the functions of the government or to take responsibility for them.

Having the reasonable assurance that the fulfillment of its promises will not be obstructed at the present session of parliament, at least by the official opposition, the government will have no excuse for any failure to carry out that program. (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 46)

During debate on the Address in Reply to the SFT, it is customary for the opposition parties, in particular the official opposition, to move amendments to the main motion calling on the House to pass the SFT. As previously noted, the votes on these amendments are considered votes of confidence, and, if carried, could provoke the dissolution of Parliament and a new election. In this case, the Liberals decided not to move the traditional vote of non-confidence in the form of an amendment to the SFT. St. Laurent explained this highly unusual tactic by stating:

In the special circumstances in which this house finds itself where no party has a majority by where there does seem to be a disposition to give the government the opportunity to bring its legislation before the house, it

does not seem to us in the official opposition to be appropriate to move the traditional vote of want of confidence.

Such a motion could, it seems to me, have only one or other of two effects. If the motion were carried it would deny the government the possibility of attempting to fulfil their promises. If the motion were not carried it would serve merely to put forward some alternative proposition, and the beginning of this session does not seem to be the time for that.

Having decided not to move an amendment ourselves, we do not feel at this time that we should support any amendment to the address moved in any other quarter of the house.

We feel that the government has enunciated a program in the speech from the throne in general terms. No doubt the government has legislation in which we will find more precise, more concrete suggestions than those contained in the speech from the throne, and we think that the government should have the opportunity of producing that legislation. If that legislation is, as it would appear to be, in line with the pre-election promises made by the government which resulted in the situation which induced us to tender our resignation to His Excellency the Governor General then the government should have the opportunity of producing that legislation and making to the Canadian public that it is, and always was, its intention to carry out those promises, and that it feels this can be done without any serious effect on the future economy of the Canadian nation. (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 47)

In short, the Liberals were comfortable with the overall direction proposed by the PCs in their SFT and, more importantly, they were prepared to allow them to see their agenda through. They would not vote non-confidence in the PC government anytime in the near future, at least not until the party had chosen a new leader at their January leadership convention.

The Address in Reply given by the leader of the CCF, Coldwell, was similar in tone to that of the Liberal leader. While it focused primarily on agriculture and improving the situation of senior citizens, it also recognized the elements of commonality

between what the PCs had put forward in their SFT and the stated programs of the opposition parties. Coldwell stated: "It is quite obvious from the speech from the throne that the government is anxious to secure support for legislation which has been promoted across this country, not by one party but by several parties" (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 54). Given these similarities, the CCF assured its support for this legislation. Coldwell added:

The speech from the throne does foreshadow legislation in which we are indeed interested as a party. When this legislation comes down I do not imagine it will go quite as far as we would wish but whatever instalments are made will receive our support and the government can be assured of that. (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 54)

However, the CCF believed that the country needed national social and economic planning, which it felt the government had not adequately addressed in its SFT. Therefore, it introduced an amendment calling on the government "to deal with the menace of inflation, rapidly rising unemployment and other serious problems facing this country" (*Debates*, October 16, 1957, p. 56).

As for SC leader Low, he was so taken aback by the pronouncements of goodwill and cooperation expressed by the other two party leaders that he made the following revealing statement:

I must say, though, that the government is in the enviable position of having people pay great tributes to it, and I can only say that never in my experience have so many opposition parties and members been determined to keep a government in office. This is indeed an unusual circumstance. All governments that I have seen thus far are ones that the

opposition wanted to defeat at the first opportunity, but here we have a changed circumstance and what a drastic change it is. (*Debates*, October, 18, 1957, pp. 142-143)

Low's Address in Reply to the SFT focused primarily on an issue that is central to the SC movement: monetary policy. Consequently, he moved a sub-amendment to the CCF amendment that essentially shifted the motion from inflation and unemployment to monetary policy and the cost of living.

In sum, by all accounts, the SFT was well received. In the debate that followed, the leaders of all three opposition parties declared a high level of comfort with the PC agenda and vowed to cooperate with the new government in achieving its stated program. This bode well for the PCs both in terms of their bargaining power and agenda control.

### *SFT Confidence Votes*

The fact that the LPC decided not to introduce an amendment to the SFT did not dissuade one independent-minded Liberal member from putting forward his own. Liberal MP Wilfrid Lacroix (Montmorency) introduced an amendment calling on the government to "consider at once the advisability of taking steps to give to this country a truly Canadian flag" (*Debates*, November 15, 1957, p. 1183). The CCF

moved a sub-amendment to Mr. Lacroix' amendment, altering the wording but not its overall intent. Outside of the CCF caucus, these amendments received little support and were defeated easily. As we will see, the flag issue will play prominently in Pearson's first minority government from 1963-1965, which is the object of study of our next chapter.

As for the CCF amendment on social and economic planning, it was also easily defeated as was the SC sub-amendment to this amendment. These amendments did not pass because the parties that introduced them failed to get any substantial support outside their respective caucuses. While the PCs had enough members to win all four votes, it received support from different parties (Liberal, CCF, SC) as well as independent MPs (Independent, Independent Liberal, Independent Labour, Independent PC) during the different votes.<sup>45</sup>

The Liberal decision not to introduce the traditional vote of non-confidence in the form of an amendment to the SFT and the voting patterns of the various opposition parties on the other opposition party amendments seem to confirm the opposition parties' genuine willingness to cooperate with the government in implementing its stated agenda. It could also be an indication of parties not eager to see the government defeated out of fear of an election. Given this state of affairs, the PCs

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<sup>45</sup> See Appendix C for a record of the key votes that occurred during 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament.

were in good command of the parliamentary agenda and well-positioned to see their program through.

### *Legislative Agenda*

Once the debate and votes on the SFT were completed, the government began to introduce legislation in response to its promises and commitments. In 78 sitting days, the Diefenbaker government introduced a total of 30 bills in the House, of which 27 received Royal Assent. A full two-third of these bills (18) were amendments to existing Acts while only one-third (9) represented new Acts.<sup>46</sup>

Diefenbaker's record of achievement has been described as impressive (Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p.130). In a short period of time, virtually the government's entire legislative program was adopted in the three months following the opening of Parliament. As noted by Newman (1963), "When the House adjourned for the Christmas recess, there was a well-justified feeling in the nation that the conservative government had lived up to its promises" (p. 65). This feat is all the more impressive as it was able to accomplish this without making any significant policy concessions to the opposition parties.

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<sup>46</sup> See Appendix D for a list of the 27 government bills passed by Diefenbaker (1).

Given the fact that Diefenbaker did not have an obvious natural ideological ally, how did the government manage to pass its legislative proposals? The answer to this question can be found in 1- the very nature of the Diefenbaker government's legislative program; 2- Diefenbaker's personal brand of Toryism; 3- the opposition parties level of comfort with the legislation proposed; and, 4- the state of the opposition parties. Each of these four points deserves further analysis.

First, in the fall of 1957, Diefenbaker (1) set out a generous and ambitious agenda.

As noted by Van Dusen (1968),

Legislation flowed from the new Conservative Government like bounty from a cornucopia. Almost every day brought new laws, or amendments to existing legislation, improving the lot of the veteran, the farmer, the aged. The Liberals, apathetic in defeat, watched in silent bitterness. (p. 28)

The frenzied pace adopted by the PCs could be explained by the fact that Diefenbaker viewed the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament as a "pre-writ campaign" (Duffy, 2002, p.216). As noted by Plamondon (2009),

Though happy to govern, Diefenbaker wanted to convert his minority in Parliament into a majority as soon as possible. To ensure broad Tory appeal, he positioned his government firmly in the political centre. Diefenbaker's energy remained high and he continued to campaign as if an election was imminent. (p. 228)

This point is also reiterated by D. Smith (1995):

Ministers were eager to introduce as much attractive legislation as quickly as possible, to prepare the ground for another – and decisive – general election. Then they could settle in for the long haul and the more complex issues of trade, defense, and national development. (p. 266)

Newman (1963, p. 64-65) provides an excellent summary of this government's activities, which we have reproduced verbatim in Table 4.1:

**Table 4.1 Government Activities – Diefenbaker (1)**

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 15  | A Royal Commission on Energy was set up.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| November 7  | Old age pensions were raised to fifty-five dollars a month, and the basic residence requirement was reduced from twenty to ten years.<br><br>A bill was introduced to grant western farmers \$150 million in cash advances on farm-stored grain.                 |
| November 15 | The discriminatory provisions against married women in the Unemployment Insurance Act were revoked.                                                                                                                                                              |
| November 19 | Butter-oil imports were banned.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| November 20 | The winter works program legislation was introduced to help offset Canada's seasonal unemployment.                                                                                                                                                               |
| November 21 | Amendments were brought in to increase, by \$110 million a year, benefits available under the Old Age Assistance, Blind Persons, Disabled Persons and War Veterans Allowances Acts.<br><br>A fifty-man trade mission, led by Gordon Churchill, left for Britain. |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| November 25-26 | A Dominion-Provincial Conference was convened to work out the details for starting the National Hospital Insurance scheme six months ahead of the previous deadline.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| November 28    | The Unemployment Insurance Act was amended to extend the period of supplementary benefits from sixteen to twenty-four weeks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| December 6     | <p>Finance Minister Donald Fleming cut taxes by an annual \$178 million. A hundred thousand Canadians in the lower income brackets were wiped off the tax rolls by the addition of \$100 to dependent exemptions.</p> <p>The excise tax on automobiles was reduced from 10 per cent to 7.5 per cent.</p> <p>Personal rates were reduced by 2 per cent on the first and 1 per cent on the second \$1,000 of taxable income.</p> <p>Small businessmen were aided by having the corporation tax rate on incomes of \$20,000-\$25,000 reduced from 47 per cent to 20 per cent.</p> |
| December 10    | A Royal Commission on Price Spreads was established.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| December 16    | A price support of \$13.00 a ton was placed on sugar beets.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| December 19    | <p>The Canadian Vessel Construction Act was amended to extend benefits for Canadian shipyards.</p> <p>Another \$150 million was made available for loans under the National Housing Act.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| December 20    | The Export Credits Insurance Act was amended to allow Canadian businessmen the use of an extra \$100                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|             |                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             | <p>million in outstanding credits.</p> <p>The Pensions Act was changed, further raising the allowances to disabled veterans.</p> |
| December 21 | <p>A bill was introduced amending the Criminal Code to provide for the humane slaughter of animals.</p>                          |

Earlier in this chapter we attempted to describe Diefenbaker's philosophical and ideological orientations. At that time, we posed the question as to whether or not his world view was reflected in the government's policy program. Now that we have highlighted his government's legislative program, we can respond in the affirmative. As made evident by the government actions described above, Diefenbaker positioned his government in the political centre and put forward policies sure to get broad support amongst the opposition parties. In fact, some have argued that Diefenbaker was attempting "to outdo the Liberals in founding programs and organizing spending that would improve people's lives" (Bliss, 1994, p. 190). By doing so, Diefenbaker enhanced his bargaining power all the while ensuring he and his party were firmly in control of the agenda. Given the government's legislative program and its leader's political leanings, the opposition parties were, generally speaking, very comfortable with this agenda.

This brings us to our third and fourth points: the opposition parties' level of comfort with the legislation proposed and the state of the opposition parties. As stated

earlier, the opposition parties were in a cooperative and conciliatory mood vis-à-vis the government. From the outset, the leaders of the CCF and the SC had “declared that they would co-operate with whichever party (the Liberals or the Conservatives formed the new government, in order to give the country good administration” (Nicholson, 1968, pp. 52-53). Both reiterated this pledge to the governing PCs in the House once Parliament convened. Also, the leader of the official opposition did the same, even forgoing the usual non-confidence motion during the SFT vote. These gestures of goodwill on behalf of the opposition parties should not be interpreted as mere altruistic pronouncements for the public good. Undoubtedly, there was some self-interested motivation. For example, we have already mentioned that the LPC was in the middle of a leadership contest to be held in January 1958 and the CCF was busy celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the fall of 1957 while its leader was out of the country for the better part of November and December. Clearly, defeating the government and going to the polls was not on their radar screen. However, the possibility of an election was never far from the prime minister’s thoughts. This issue will be addressed more fully in the third section of this chapter.

### *Other Parliamentary Business and Votes*

Given that the government can choose the timing and presentation of issues before the House, it is better positioned to ensure its survival and pass its legislative agenda. One of the tools at a government’s disposal to achieve this is the setting of

the parliamentary calendar. What is interesting about the Diefenbaker government of 1957-1958 is the fact that despite sitting for a total of 78 days and spanning over four months, it never presented a budget. To be clear, while it did not present a traditional budget, it did however introduce budgetary and tax proposals in the finance estimates tabled in the House on December 6, 1957. While estimates are important and the government's failure to pass them could lead to an election, they are not greeted with the same level of enthusiasm, attention, and scrutiny as a budget, especially from the media and electorate.

The issue of introducing a budget was often raised in the House by opposition parties. Diefenbaker responded to these queries by stating past parliamentary precedents where no budgets were introduced, in particular when second sessions took place in the same year. He also argued that a formal budget was not necessary, as he did on December 2, 1957, in response to a question from a CCF MP:

In so far as changes in the income taxes are concerned, those changes could be made by notice; and in my opinion the few changes that will be made, having regard to the shortage of time available and the fact that this is the second session this year and in the main to the fact that consideration is to be given to the estimates prepared and advanced by the former government, we feel that a formal budget is not necessary at this time. (*Debates*, December 2, 1957, p. 1710)

As we will see in the following section of this chapter, Diefenbaker was also eager to put an end to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, call an election and win a majority. For a

government, introducing and successfully passing a budget in a majority situation is much less fraught with danger and pitfalls than attempting to do the same in a minority parliament.

While there were no confidence votes on a budget, there was a key vote on a supply bill early in the government's mandate on October 17, 1957, which ensured the government had the money to pay the bills. There was also a crucial vote at second reading of a bill to amend the *Excise Tax Act* on December 12, 1957. On both of these occasions, the bills were passed virtually unanimously, 194 to 1 and 175 to nil, respectively. In all, there were 18 recorded divisions in the House and 5 standing divisions, which occurred when the House was examining legislation in Committee of the Whole. The latter pertained to opposition amendments to specific clauses of government bills. All were defeated, and none threatened the government's survival. As for the 18 recorded divisions, those of which were confidence tests for the government have been discussed, save for one, which we will discuss shortly.

In sum, throughout the life of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, "there was no danger of defeat in the House" (D. Smith, 1995, p. 270). In fact, the voting record of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament (Appendix C) reveals that the LPC is the party that most consistently voted with the government. On virtually every important vote in the House, enough Liberals either voted with the government or simply stayed away. The only exception occurred on

January 21, 1958, when the Liberals introduced an amendment to a supply motion calling for the government to resign. The events surrounding this motion and subsequent vote of non-confidence will be discussed in section three of this chapter.

### *Summary*

To sum up this section on agenda control, in the fall of 1957, Diefenbaker seemed in full control of the government's agenda. A review of the *Debates of the House of Commons* reveals that there were no serious objections or challenges to his SFT or to his major legislative initiatives.

Due to the very nature of the Diefenbaker government's legislative program, which was a reflection of Diefenbaker's personal brand of Toryism, the opposition parties' level of comfort with the legislation proposed was very high. Moreover, due to the state of the opposition parties, in particular the official opposition, who found themselves in the midst of a leadership race, the Diefenbaker government did not have to make many, if any, policy concessions. Plus, Diefenbaker opted not to introduce a traditional budget. He did introduce budgetary and tax proposals via the finance estimates, thereby avoiding greater scrutiny from the electorate.

### **III      Dissolution: How Diefenbaker (1) Ended**

The circumstances that lead to the end of a Parliament and a government's tenure are key to understanding a minority government's effectiveness and viability. Our analysis reveals that Diefenbaker (1) enjoyed strong bargaining power and high agenda control. Also, due to reasons already discussed, this government had to make few policy concessions to ensure the passage of its legislative agenda. These circumstances provide an explanation as to the effectiveness of its legislative output (90% of bills introduced received Royal Assent). However, how can one account for the short duration of its tenure, a mere 78 days? What happened? This question is even more significant given that this government easily won all tests of confidence and that there was never any real threat to its survival. Moreover, Diefenbaker's popularity and that of his party's, as made evident by favourable polling numbers<sup>47</sup> and three by-election wins in the summer and fall of 1957<sup>48</sup>, made it clear that the PC Party under Diefenbaker's leadership was in ascendancy and in a very good position to implement its policy agenda. In the end, the government dissolved Parliament and called a general election. To understand how and why it ended so quickly, we need to examine the circumstances surrounding the government's decision to put an end to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament and seek a new mandate.<sup>49</sup> To do so, we will develop five points: 1- the debate surrounding an early

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<sup>47</sup> See Beck, 1968, p. 315.

<sup>48</sup> By-elections took place on August 26, November 4, and December 16, 1957.

<sup>49</sup> For details and analysis of the events leading up to the dissolution of Parliament on February 1, 1957, see Donaldson, 1994, pp. 194-196; Granatstein, 1986, p. 34; Hutchison, 1967, pp. 182-183; Newman, 1963, pp. 66-67; Nicholson, 1968, pp. 77-82; and, D. Smith, 1995, pp. 272-278.

election call; 2- the functioning of Parliament; 3- Pearson's motion of non-confidence; 4- the "hidden report"; and, 5- Diefenbaker's rationale for dissolution.

### *The debate surrounding an early election call*

Diefenbaker stated in his memoirs that while he was prepared to leave his options open, he was "in no way committed to an early election" (Diefenbaker, 1975, p. 64). However, there exists considerable evidence to suggest that Diefenbaker's preferred option was indeed an early election.

First, as uncovered by D. Smith (1995, p. 626, n103) cabinet documents as early as June 22, 1957, reveal the government's desire for an early election. *Cabinet Conclusions* show that the issue of the timing of the next general election was raised by ministers in discussion of the fall parliamentary calendar. The cabinet minutes reported:

There were those who felt that it was important to hold an early session in September with a view to implementing some of the more important pledges the Conservative Party made during its electoral campaign, and then seek dissolution in order to have general elections in the Fall of this year. However, because the visit of the Queen to Ottawa would be robbed of the greater part of its new Parliament, and because it would be virtually impossible to hold a short session between September 28<sup>th</sup> and October 11<sup>th</sup>, the consensus of opinion was that there was no alternative but to agree that the first session should be convened to meet on October 14<sup>th</sup> and be opened by the Queen. This, of course, ruled out the possibility of holding general elections prior to the Spring of 1958. (*Cabinet Conclusions*, June 22, 1957)

Second, as revealed by historian J. L. Granatstein, Diefenbaker had been talking to Governor General Vincent Massey since early November 1957 about the need for a quick election (Granatstein, 1986, p. 35). On November 7, Massey wrote in his personal diary:

[Diefenbaker], however, brought up the question of his intention to ask for a Dissolution of Parliament before long – in fact, as soon as an Election could be held after a Leader had been chosen for the Liberal Party (otherwise he would be charged with unfairness). (*Massey Diary*, November 7, 1957)

In the same entry, Massey goes on to add: “The Prime Minister said that the longer the election was postponed, the economic situation, involving unemployment etc., would be adverse to the Government’s fortunes. (That, of course, was a purely political consideration and not my concern.)”

Third, ministers were publicly musing about an early election as early as August and this intensified in early autumn (see *Debates*, November 11, 1957, p. 977). Ministers were eager to take advantage of their government’s strong showing in public opinion polls, plus “[they] knew that the Liberals, CCF, and SC were tired, demoralized, and debt-ridden: they [the opposition parties] would hang on in the new parliament as long as they could” (D. Smith, 1995, p. 272). To highlight this point, we recall the SC Party leader’s words during the debate on the Address in Reply (as cited on p. 99), when he commented that in all his years of experience in Parliament he had never seen so many opposition parties and members determined to keep a government in office. This sentiment was echoed over and over again by

MPs from all opposition parties throughout the fall/winter session. For example, on November 11, 1957, CCF MP A. B. Macdonald (Vancouver-Kingsway) reminded the government of its obligation to carry out its constitutional duty and govern:

...loose talk about an election, the kind of loose talk we have heard, seems to me to indicate that those who engage in it forget that this government, like any other one, was elected to transact public business and that as long as it can do so in this parliament, its duty is to carry on while this condition prevails. (*Debates*, November 11, 1957, p. 978)

For his part, the Liberal leader repeated on many occasions during debate in the House his party's pledge made in the Address in Reply not to oppose the government's implementation of its election promises (see *Debates*, pp. 1211-1212, pp. 1233-1234, and p. 1709 for examples). It was clear from these pronouncements that the only party keen on going to the polls was the governing party.

All this election speculation prompted constitutional expert Eugene Forsey to publicly question the appropriateness of an early election call. In an open letter to the editor printed in the *Ottawa Journal*, Forsey argued that constitutionally, a government cannot "call for an election in the early days of a new Parliament just to cash in on a rise in its political fortunes" (Russell, 2008, p. 27). Forsey wrote in conclusion to his letter:

To announce, eight or ten months in advance, that whatever Parliament does, it will be dissolved next spring seems to me to be a very odd way of showing respect for Parliament. Elections are serious matters. They disrupt business. They interrupt the orderly conduct of foreign policy.

They cost money, millions to the public treasury, millions more to the parties and the candidates. A second election within a year can be justified only on grounds of public necessity. A clear majority for the Government over all other parties is a convenience for the Government. It is not, in itself, a public necessity. It becomes so only if the conduct of the opposition parties makes it so....a party committed to restoring and maintaining the rights of Parliament should allow Parliament to do the public business it was elected to do. (*Ottawa Journal*, August 9, 1957)

At the end of October, Forsey also sent a copy of this letter to the prime minister with a covering letter. Diefenbaker replied to Forsey, saying that he fully agreed with him, but as Denis Smith, Diefenbaker's biographer, observes, "The temptation to dissolve early remained strong; but with Forsey on the watch, Diefenbaker would have to take care about his justifications" (as cited in D. Smith, 1995, p. 274; see also Russell, 2008, p. 27).

### *The functioning of Parliament*

In the fall of 1957, in order to build a case for an early election, Diefenbaker and his ministers began to argue that Parliament was not functioning well. For example, on November 19, 1957, during a debate in the House, Diefenbaker stated:

Indeed the diversity of the tactics of the Liberal and C.C.F. parties gives some indication of how hopeless it is for the House of Commons to carry out its functions with the present unhealthy lack of a working majority on the party of the government. (*Debates*, November 19, 1957, p. 1300)

On the very same day, he appears to be goading the opposition parties to put forward a motion expressing its non-confidence in his government: "they talk like

lions, they will vote as lambs" (*Debates*, November 19, 1957, p. 1300). A few days earlier, Howard Green, Minister of Public Works, stated in the House:

Our whole system of government is based on the government of the day having the responsibility of giving leadership to the Canadian people. That responsibility can only be assured where the government has a majority. If we are to have in Canada perpetually a system under which two small parties are able to hold up the government of the day, then government in the country will have reached a sad state. Like everyone else in the present house, the members of the government are making the best of a situation which is really not in the best interests of democracy in Canada. (*Debates*, November 15, 1957, p. 1207)

Despite these public declarations condemning a dysfunctional and unhealthy Parliament, Diefenbaker stated in his memoirs: "From my point of view, it had been, with the possible exception of its last few days, a good Parliament" (Diefenbaker, 1975, p. 83). This version of a productive and cooperative Parliament is corroborated by many historians and analysts. For example, Beck (1968) wrote: "It is not true that the government's position had become intolerable, but the Prime Minister made it sound convincing to the ordinary voter" (Beck, 1968, p. 312). Also, Bothwell, Drummond, and English (1981) said: "Thanks to Liberal co-operation, during the session of 1957-8 things in Parliament went well. The new government was able to legislate, and it shoved masses of paper through the House machine" (p. 198). Still, Diefenbaker was looking for a pretext to dissolve Parliament and get his majority. In his maiden speech in Parliament the new leader of the LPC gave Diefenbaker what he wanted.

### *Pearson's motion of non-confidence*

As previously noted, in early September, St. Laurent announced his intention to step down as the leader of the LPC and a leadership convention was set for January 1958. On January 16, 1958, former cabinet minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner Lester B. Pearson succeeded St. Laurent as leader of the party. Upon his election as leader, Pearson gave a spirited victory speech pledging “to do all he could to defeat the Diefenbaker government at the first opportunity” (Granatstein, 1986, p. 34). In preparation for his maiden speech in the House, there was a debate amongst his senior ministers and top advisors as to the best strategy moving forward. Historian Bruce Hutchison (1967) described the diverging positions in the following terms:

One group warned him that on no account must he give the minority Diefenbaker Government an excuse to call an early election, so he must not move a want-of-confidence motion; the other group maintained that Pearson would be destroyed if he refused battle and, therefore, he must defeat the Government if possible and chance an election. (pp. 210-211)

Pearson decided to go with a compromise position fabricated by his trusted advisor, Jack Pickersgill: call on Diefenbaker to resign and hand over the government, knowing full well that the CCF and SC would not support such a motion. The motion read:

In view of the fact that, in the seven months His Excellency's advisers have been in office, Canada's total trade has ceased to expand, export markets have been threatened, and proposals for freer trade have been rebuffed;

That investment has been discouraged and unemployment has risen drastically;

That farmers and other primary producers have been disillusioned and discouraged;

That relations with provincial governments have deteriorated into confusion;

That the budget is no longer in balance, revenues are declining, expenditures are rising and parliament has been denied a national accounting;

That there is growing confusion about defence and security;

That day to day expedients have been substituted for firm and steady administration;

And in view of the desirability, at this time, of having a government pledged to implement Liberal policies;

His Excellency's advisers should, in the opinion of this house, submit their resignation forthwith. (*Debates*, January 20, 1958, p. 3520)

Diefenbaker could not believe his good fortune. In his memoirs, he wrote: "If someone had come to me that morning and told me of Mr. Pearson's proposed course of action, I would have laughed him out of my office" (Diefenbaker, 1975, p. 81) and "I could barely believe my ears. I turned to Donald Fleming, my desk mate, and said, 'This is the complete end of opposition to us.' And laughing, I turned to Howard Green and said, 'This is it.'" (Diefenbaker, 1975, p. 82)

Once Pearson completed his speech, Diefenbaker stood and delivered what historians and observers have called a "verbal hiding" (Van Dusen, 1968, p. 30) and

“a speech of joyous annihilation” (Hutchison, 1967, p. 211). According to Russell (2008), “Things got so bad that a kindly member of the CCF rose in the House to ask ‘if the Prime Minister believes in the humane slaughter of animals’” (p. 28).

In Stursberg (1975), Pickersgill gave the following rationale for the wording of the motion:

Perhaps, in retrospect, I see things that I couldn't have seen then, but I thought if we moved a straight vote of want of confidence in the government that the CCF and the Social Credit people would have to support it. That would defeat Diefenbaker and give him the election he wanted. Therefore, I said, having got ourselves into this mess by breathing fire and slaughter and saying we were going to try to bring the government down, we had to find some weaseling motion that we would be sure the small parties would not vote for so that Diefenbaker would not be defeated. He would get what he would claim was a vote of confidence and would have no excuse to precipitate an election. Now, that is the real reasoning behind it, and I have never said it publicly before. (p. 86)

In the end, the CCF and SC voted with the PCs, the motion failed, and the government was not defeated. However, this motion turned out to be a grievous error. In stating the moral imperative of handing back the government to the LPC, Pearson and the Liberals could later be branded as arrogant, vain, and dismissive of the expressed democratic will of the people. This is exactly what Diefenbaker did during the 1958 general election.

In addition to Pearson's motion of non-confidence, Diefenbaker found another pretense to dissolve Parliament and call an early election: the "hidden report".

### *The "hidden report"*

Unbeknown to Pearson and the Liberals, Diefenbaker had in his possession a government report classified as "Secret". The document, titled "The Canadian Economic Outlook for 1957", had been prepared for the previous Liberal government as one of an annual series of confidential documents for ministers on the economy (D. Smith, 1995: 276). This report, prepared in March 1957 in the Department of Trade and Commerce, forecasted a slowdown in economic activity and a rise in unemployment during 1957 (Fraser, 1958, p. 2). To counter Liberal charges that the present unemployment was the fault of the PCs, Diefenbaker used this document to his political advantage. According to Granatstein (1986), Diefenbaker used this document as evidence, "charged that the Liberal government had known then that an economic recession was on the way", that it had done nothing to prevent it, and worse, that it had wrongfully concealed the truth from Canadians (p. 35). According to Mitchell Sharp (1994), the Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce at that time, "Diefenbaker not only used the 1957 outlook report on that House of Commons occasion to humiliate Pearson, he flourished it throughout the 1958 election campaign with telling effect" (p. 73).

### *Diefenbaker's rationale for dissolution*

The political fallout of these two events, Pearson's motion of non-confidence and the "hidden report", provided Diefenbaker with the proper coverage to justify going to the people to clear the air. On February 1, 1958, Diefenbaker visited the governor general who granted his wish for dissolution. When Diefenbaker rose in the House that same afternoon to notify MPs that Parliament had been dissolved and a general election would be held on March 31, 1958, he was greeted with hoots and howls. It was a rare and bizarre spectacle in Canadian parliamentary history where opposition members insisted on speaking but could not be recognized by the Speaker because the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament was no more. In his memoirs, Diefenbaker (1975) recalled the moment in the following words:

I...entered the House a minute or so after six. Mr. Gardiner [Liberal MP] was speaking when I arrived. To his consternation and to the general dismay of his colleagues, I announced that Canada's twenty-third Parliament was no more. Needless to say, the reaction on the Opposition side was pretty stormy. Indeed, this was the only occasion in the history of Canada when the House of Commons went on as if it actually existed, when in fact it was completely "non est", having been already dissolved. Those who insisted on speaking were speaking as in a vacuum; they were no longer Members of Parliament. (Diefenbaker, 1975, p. 83)

Diefenbaker justified his decision thus: his government needed a new and stronger mandate; the House was not functioning properly; and, the Liberals had withdrawn their support. As we will see in other chapters, the first two arguments are popular refrains used by governing parties to justify early elections. As for the third argument, one can legitimately question the veracity of this statement. In fact,

Diefenbaker himself admitted in his memoirs that “under no circumstances did they [Liberals] want an election [in early 1958] (Diefenbaker, 1975, p. 82).

### *Summary*

It is clear that from the moment Diefenbaker formed the government in 1957 he was looking for an opportunity to transform his minority into a majority. However, the opposition parties made no attempt to challenge him or his government out of fear of an election. This was particularly true for the Liberals, as the out-going Liberal leader, Louis St. Laurent, was a spent force (Beck, 1968, p. 311). This situation changed substantially in January of 1958 when a new Liberal leader took over the helm of the party and faced-off against Diefenbaker in the House. When Pearson provided him with a pretense to dissolve Parliament, Diefenbaker pounced. In the end, his political instincts were correct. The following election on March 31, 1958, resulted in the greatest win in Canadian political history – until Brian Mulroney’s landslide victory in 1984. Diefenbaker got the majority he was seeking. In fact, he won 208 of the 265 seats in the House. The Liberals were reduced to 49 seats, their worst showing ever. The leader of the CCF lost his seat and his party was reduced to 8 seats, all in Western Canada. The leader of the SC Party suffered the same fate and also lost his seat along with every other SC MP. It was truly a decisive victory for Diefenbaker and his party.

## **Conclusion**

Our theoretical framework goes a long way in explaining Diefenbaker (1)'s effectiveness. However, it falls short in explaining its viability. Given that Diefenbaker (1) had both strong bargaining power and high agenda control and minimal policy concession requirements, it seemingly had the potential to be successful (i.e., last long and pass its legislative program). This assertion is predicated of course on the premise that the circumstances that allowed this to occur remained constant. However, other factors, namely the opportunity to secure a majority, came into play and cut short the government's tenure.

What have we learned from the Diefenbaker government about our hypothesis on minority government in Canada? What lessons can be drawn from this minority government? First, parliamentary norms delayed Diefenbaker from calling an election earlier. Constitutional experts, including Eugene Forsey, made the argument that a government cannot call for an election in the early days of a new Parliament just to cash in on a rise in its political fortunes. Second, the Diefenbaker government used the parliamentary agenda to its advantage by not introducing a traditional budget (i.e., ways and means resolution). Instead, to ensure safe passage and avoid greater public scrutiny of his budgetary and tax proposals, Diefenbaker introduced these measures through the back door via the finance estimates. Third, the role of the leader of the opposition and his/her parliamentary skill cannot be underestimated. Had Pearson's start as leader of the Liberal Party

and leader of the official opposition not been so inauspicious, perhaps Diefenbaker would have resisted the temptation of going to the polls so early in his first mandate. Finally, the possibility of making electoral gains, in particular the possibility of securing a majority, is a powerful motivation. Given his personal popularity, his government's strong polling numbers, the vulnerability of the new leader of the official opposition, and the buoyant public mood, Diefenbaker could not resist the temptation of dissolving Parliament and calling an election to seek a majority.

## **CHAPTER 5<sup>50</sup>**

### **PEARSON (1)**

#### **1963 - 1965**

Most expected the LPC to win the 1963 general election held on April 8, 1963 (Cook and Bélanger, 2007, p. 401). According to Russell (2008), “Going into the election, the Liberals ha[d] all the momentum – a successful policy conference, a clutch of new talent, and a Noble Peace Prize winner as leader running against a bloodied and humiliated John Diefenbaker” (Russell, 2008, p. 31). In spite of this, Liberal leader Lester B. Pearson managed to “snatch[ed] defeat from the jaws of victory” (Beck, 1968, p. 362). This sentiment was echoed by Donaldson (1994) who wrote “the Liberals very nearly achieved defeat. It eluded them only because the weight of evidence against Diefenbaker was so enormous that the twenty million live Canadians could not ignore it” (p. 211).

The 1963 general election was the third encounter between Pearson and Diefenbaker. When the civilian votes were counted on election night the party standings were Liberals 128, PCs 98, SC 24, and NDP 17 (Saywell, 1964, p. 36). The Liberals were 5 seats short of 133 needed “for the barest of majorities” (Beal, 1964, p. 3). However, because the 96,000 overseas armed forces votes had not yet been counted, Diefenbaker hesitated for a few days before conceding defeat (D.

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<sup>50</sup> The 1963, 1964 and 1965 editions of the *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs* (edited by John Saywell) were an invaluable source of information in preparing and writing this chapter. The chapters titled “Parliament and Politics” were written by John Saywell.

Smith, 1973, p. 133). Once the armed forces votes were counted and a recount in the Quebec riding of Pontiac-Temiscamingue was completed, the result was a Liberal minority victory. In the end, the Liberals had won 129 seats, a gain of 29; the PCs held 95, a loss of 21, including 7 ministers; the NDP took 17, a loss of two; and, SC lost 6, to end at 24 seats (Granatstein, 1986, p. 137).

**Figure 5.1    Seat count of the 26<sup>th</sup> General Election (April 8, 1963)**

|                                             |     |
|---------------------------------------------|-----|
| Liberal Party of Canada                     | 129 |
| Progressive Conservative Party              | 95  |
| Social Credit Party                         | 24  |
| New Democratic Party                        | 17  |
| Total                                       | 265 |
| Number of seats required for majority = 133 |     |

On April 15, 1963, Diefenbaker discussed the transfer of power with Pearson, and two days later (April 17) gave his resignation to Governor General Georges P. Vanier. On April 22, Lester Bowles Pearson took office as Canada's 14th Prime Minister (D. Smith, 1973, p. 133). It was Canada's 3<sup>rd</sup> minority government in six years.<sup>51</sup>

This government, the first of two consecutive Liberal minority governments under Pearson (1963-65 and 1965-68), represents our second type of minority

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<sup>51</sup> See Appendix E for a chronology of the main events of the life of this government.

government: long duration / high output. Amongst Canada's eight minority governments since 1957, Pearson (1) ranks high on duration (first overall with a record 418 House sitting days) and ranks high on legislative output (a close third with a 86.9% passing rate of government bills)<sup>52</sup>. According to Russell (2008), Pearson's time in office was a period of major accomplishments where, amongst many other important measures, the foundations of the Canadian welfare state were laid (p. 30).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the Liberals' bargaining power post-election; the second section assesses the government's control of the agenda; and, the third section describes how this government ended.

## **I Bargaining Power**

Determining the strength of a minority party's bargaining power is key to understanding the majority building strategies used by minority governments to ensure their survival and pass their legislative agenda. Bargaining power is largely a function of interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion. This section will focus on these two factors by first assessing the make-up of the House, and, second, by providing a picture of the state of each of the parties following the general election with a particular focus on appraising the availability of potential partners and the possibility of cooperation between parties.

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<sup>52</sup> Only Diefenbaker (1) and Pearson (2) had higher legislative output, with 90% and 89.9% overall averages respectively.

### *Make-up of the House of Commons*

As noted, the Liberals elected 129 members on election night.<sup>53</sup> The House in 1963 had 265 seats. Therefore, 133 was the magic number required for a majority. The governing party was four seats short of its majority. Due to the long tenure of this Parliament, it was marked by numerous deaths, appointments, by-elections, defections, and even, the break-up of a party. These events had an impact on the overall number of seats each party held and the dynamics of the House. In the following pages we will attempt to summarize these events in order to paint a clearer picture of the relative strength of each party during the life of this Parliament.

During the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament (May 16, 1963 to September 7, 1965), five MPs passed away (four in 1964; one in 1965)<sup>54</sup>; the prime minister appointed three MPs (two to the Senate and one as High Commissioner for Canada in London) (two in 1964; one in 1965)<sup>55</sup>; six by-elections were held to fill vacated seats (all in 1964)<sup>56</sup>; and, there were five defections / floor crossings (one in 1963; two in 1964; two in

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<sup>53</sup> One of these members, William Moore Benidickson (Kenora-Rainy River), was elected and sat in the House as a “Liberal-Labour” MP. However, voting records show that he systematically voted with the other Liberal members. He joined the Liberal caucus when he was appointed to the Senate by Pearson on July 7, 1965. For the purpose of our vote counts for this Parliament (see Appendix G), Benidickson’s votes were tabulated with the Liberals.

<sup>54</sup> PC Henry Jones (Saskatoon) died on March 5, 1964. Liberal John Garland (Nipissing) died on March 14, 1964. PC Gordon Chaplin (Waterloo South) died on June 27, 1964. Liberal Sherwood Rideout (Westmorland) died on May 29, 1964. PC George Nowlan (Digby-Annapolis-Kings) died on May 31, 1965.

<sup>55</sup> Liberal Denis Azellus (Saint-Denis) was named to the Senate on February 3, 1964. Liberal Lionel Chevrier (Laurier) was named High Commissioner for Canada in London on February 6, 1964. Liberal-Labour William Benidickson (Kenora-Rainy River) was appointed to the Senate on July 7, 1965.

<sup>56</sup> In by-elections in Laurier and Saint-Denis (Quebec) on February 10, 1964, the Liberals held on to both seats. In by-elections in Saskatoon (Saskatchewan) and Nipissing (Ontario) on June 22, 1964, the Conservatives held to the first seat and the Liberals held on to the other. In by-elections in Westmorland (New Brunswick) and Waterloo South (Ontario) on November 9, 1964, the Liberals held on to the first and the NDP captured the other from the PCs.

1965)<sup>57</sup>. Also, on May 16, 1963, when the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament opened, Liberal MP Alan A. Macnaughton (Mount Royal) was designated as Speaker-elect, depriving the governing Liberals of one vote in the House.

However, the big story of this Parliament was the internecine war within the SC Party that eventually led to its break-up in September 1963. This internal party event had a profound impact on the interparty dynamics of this Parliament and ultimately on the survival and legislative output of the government. Before we analyze the details of the SC schism, we need to examine the events which preceded and triggered it.

First, as already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Diefenbaker hesitated to concede defeat on election night in 1963 and remained silent about his intentions. He even mused about remaining in office and meeting Parliament, citing the 1925 precedent when Prime Minister King met Parliament arguing that no party had a majority. Given that the election night results were showing that the PC Party had won 30 seats less than the Liberals and that it had a much lower share of the popular vote (the results ended up being LPC 41% and PC 32%), he received little

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<sup>57</sup> Guy Marcoux (Quebec-Montmorency) announced his decision to sit as an Independent Social Credit MP On May 9, 1963. Gérard Girouard (Labelle) and Gérard Ouellet (Rimouski) quit the SC caucus and joined the PC caucus on April 23, 1964. Rémi Paul (Berthier-Maskinongé-Delanaudière) quit the PC caucus to sit as an Independent on February 18, 1965. Léon Balcer (Trois-Rivières) quit the PC caucus to sit as an Independent on April 7, 1965.

public support for his musings and the 1925 analogy was rejected almost unanimously by the national media (Saywell, 1964, p. 45).

However, Diefenbaker's attitude and behavior prompted six Quebec Socreds (i.e., members of the Social Credit Party)<sup>58</sup> to send a notarized letter to Governor General Vanier (with a copy to Pearson and the press) on April 12 (4 days after the election) stating their support for a Liberal government led by Pearson (see Appendix F for a copy of the letter).

According to the 1963 *Annual Review* (Saywell, 1964), the statement took everyone by surprise.<sup>59</sup> This letter was significant because it ensured the Pearson government majority support in Parliament. It also had the effect of creating chaos, confusion, and animosity within the ranks of the SC Party. Robert Thompson, leader of the SC Party, denied any knowledge of the statement. He strongly repudiated his MPs stating that he would not tolerate any deals of any kind and launched an internal investigation into the matter. For his part, Réal Caouette, deputy leader and leader of the Quebec wing of the party, also denied any knowledge of the statement. However, he adopted a much more conciliatory tone defending the six as "*de bons créditistes*" and stating: "*Ils ont posé un geste d'hommes libres. Personnellement, je répète ce que j'ai dit: nous sommes prêts à*

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<sup>58</sup> The six Socred MPs were: Jean Robert Beaulé (Quebec East), Pierre-André Boutin (Dorchester), Raymond Langlois (Mégantic), Gérard Perron (Beauce), Lucien Plourde (Quebec West), and Gilbert F. Rondeau (Shefford).

<sup>59</sup> For a complete account of these events, see Saywell, 1964, pp. 45-47; see also Huguet, 1981, pp. 239-259.

*appuyer le parti Libéral à Ottawa s'il remplace l'austérité au Canada par la prospérité*" (as cited in Huguet, 1981, p. 242).

Even more surprisingly, the very next day, on April 13, three of the six publicly backed down and officially withdrew their support stating that they were tricked into believing that it was a merely a statement to be put before the party caucus.<sup>60</sup> Following a Quebec caucus meeting held in Ottawa on April 16-17, the six signatories to the original letter released a communiqué which read that the case was closed; they were withdrawing their support for the Liberal government and swore that they were not bribed, promised or received anything in exchange for their original action (Huguet, 1981, p. 242).

However, the matter was not closed and the controversy was reignited a month later after a raucous special meeting of the SC Party's national executive when Caouette gave reporters another version of the incident, indicating that the letter was to head off a coalition between PCs, Socreds, and New Democrats. As reported by Mario Cardinal of *Le Devoir* on May 13:

*« Les six députés créditistes qui ont accordé officiellement leur appui au parti Libéral ont du même coup tué dans l'œuf un projet de coalition conservatrice-créditiste-néo-démocrate qui avait d'excellentes chances d'aboutir.*

*On a même prétendu en certains milieux que les six convertis avaient précédé de vingt minutes la mise au point de la coalition et qu'il*

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<sup>60</sup> Beaulé, Boutin, and Plourde.

*ne restait plus qu'à atteindre T.C. Douglas dans son comté de Burnaby-Coquitlam, pour que le tour soit joué. C'est un peu simplifier les choses.*

*Des pourparlers sérieux avaient été entamés dès le lendemain de l'élection. Mais ces négociations se déroulaient de la façon la plus officieuse et au niveau des partis seulement. Il est à peu près certain que les trois chefs n'étaient pas au courant et qu'ils allaient être placés devant des propositions concrètes, acceptées de part et d'autre.*

*Des conditions avaient été posées par chacun des trois partis. Il apparaissait évident que le Crédit social et le Nouveau parti démocratique allaient obtenir des ministères. C'est à cette époque qu'est née à Ottawa la rumeur voulant que Stanley Knowles, le grand spécialiste de la procédure parlementaire, soit élu président de la Chambre. Il ne fait aucun doute non plus que Réal Caouette allait faire partie du Cabinet. Le chef adjoint du Crédit social a d'ailleurs confirmé dimanche soir, le fait que la présidence de la Chambre avait été assurée à M. Knowles. Il a ajouté que deux ministères avaient été promis aux créditistes.*

*En outre, les créditistes proposaient un certain nombre de législations bien précises qui auraient été adoptées par le cabinet de coalition.*

*Au nombre de ces législations, notons la création d'une banque de développement municipal, la création d'une banque d'expansion industrielle selon les modalités établies par le programme créditiste, l'augmentation de \$5 des pensions de vieillesse et l'augmentation de \$2 des allocations familiales.*

*Aucune politique officielle n'aurait été adoptée au sujet de la réforme monétaire, mais son application aurait été assurée graduellement dans le concret de tous les jours de façon à ce que dans un an ou deux, les citoyens en constatent les résultats heureux. » (as cited in Hugué, 1981, p. 249)*

According to the 1963 *Annual Review*, NDP MP Knowles branded Caouette's statement as "sheer and utter non-sense" (as cited in Saywell, 1964, p. 47). NDP leader Tommy Douglas was equally emphatic:

*"It is apparent that Mr. Caouette finds himself in some difficulty over the haywire negotiations that were conducted by some of the Social Credit members with respect to supporting a Liberal government.*

Consequently, he is now seeking a scapegoat. I can only conclude that Mr. Caouette is suffering from hallucinations and I suggest that he come up with some more plausible explanation – preferably the truth.” (as cited in Saywell, 1964, p. 47)

Whatever the real explanation for the action of the six signatories of the letter of support, this episode did nothing to smooth the already tense relationship between Thompson and Caouette. It is important to note that Thompson (from Alberta) had won the leadership of the party over Caouette (from Quebec) at a party convention in 1961. Caouette was made deputy leader. However, Caouette and his supporters never accepted the verdict, convinced that Caouette had actually won but had been denied the reigns of leadership by Alberta’s Premier Ernest Manning on the grounds that Caouette was Catholic, French Canadian and from Quebec (Rousseau & Chaussé, 1976, p. 115). In the 1962 general election, the SC Party made important gains, mostly in Quebec, and had hoped to sweep the province in 1963. Although this did not occur, of the 24 seats the SC Party did win in the 1963 general election, 20 came from Quebec. Caouette believed that since the party was most successful in Quebec, he should be leader of the party instead of Thompson. The weeks and months following the 1963 election, he was critical of Thompson’s leadership and policies, even calling him “Manning’s straw man” (Huguet, 1981: 245).

This incident and its aftermath were a harbinger of what was to come in late August and early September of the same year: the official break-up of the SC Party. As we

will see later in this chapter, these events played a key role in the survival and legislative output of Pearson (1).

### *The Social Credit schism and its aftermath*<sup>61</sup>

Following a national convention in Granby (Quebec) on August 31-September 1, 1963, the SC Party officially split over the question of leadership.<sup>62</sup> Caouette and 12 other MPs from Quebec withdrew from the SC caucus and formed a separate group which they called the *Ralliement des Créditistes* (henceforth *Ralliement*).<sup>63</sup> The SC caucus under Robert Thompson was left with only 11 members.<sup>64</sup>

By the time the House returned from its summer adjournment on September 30, Caouette had already written to the Speaker to demand recognition as an official party in the House with precedence over the SC Party and its leader. For its part, the NDP, now the third party in the House in numerical strength with 17 seats, had also contacted the Speaker to demand official recognition as the second largest opposition party with corresponding procedural rights. These claims related to two questions: first, the order of seating in the House, which dictates the order of

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<sup>61</sup> The events described so far occurred after the general election (April 8) and prior to the opening of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament (May 16). The House was in session from May 16 until August 2, when it recessed for summer until September 29. The events we are about to describe unfolded during this recess, and, as we will see, continued to play themselves out once the House began its fall sitting.

<sup>62</sup> For a complete account of this event, see Huguet, 1981, pp. 259-263 and Pickersgill, 1986, pp. 210-229.

<sup>63</sup> The six MPs who signed the April 12 letter in support of the Liberals all ended up in this group.

<sup>64</sup> On May 9, 1963, Guy Marcoux (Quebec-Montmorency) announced his decision to sit as an Independent Social Credit MP. Notwithstanding this, his voting record during this Parliament reveals that he voted with the SC caucus almost without fail.

precedence, and second, the recognition of certain members of the House as a group or a party.

The answers to these questions were not evident given that 1- although the House was accustomed to the presence of third parties, this was the first time that a third party had separated into two groups between elections, and, in the case of the members that made up the *Ralliement*, had not been elected under that party label; and, 2- historically, precedence had always been given to the party which had been in Parliament longer. However, following the 1962 election, Speaker Marcel Lambert ruled that the number of members in each group had to be the overriding consideration when determining precedence in the House. The numerical principle was also adopted following the 1963 general election.<sup>65</sup>

One thing that is clear, as noted by the Liberal House leader at the time, Jack Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillingate), “there was are procedural advantage to being recognized as the senior third party in the House” (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 210). These advantages came in the form of the order of speakers in debates, the amount of speaking time the party was given, and the right to move amendments in certain cases. Also, leaders of recognized parties with 12 or more seats in the House received a \$4,000 allowance and a bigger office with more support staff. “If the *Ralliement* was recognized as a party, its leader, since the group contained thirteen

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<sup>65</sup> See *Debates*, September 30, 1963, pp. 3009-3010 for an account of these events.

members, would be entitled to a salary, while the leader of the original SC Party would lose his salary since the group was left with fewer than 12 members” (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 211). Diefenbaker, who had opposed additional remuneration for party leaders, openly mused that this \$4,000 payment was the real motive behind the split: “If such a payment were not available I doubt very much whether there would have been the division which has taken place” (*Debates*, September 30, 1963, p. 3011).

Faced with the difficult task of settling these disputes, the Speaker concluded that he did not have the authority to do so and that the decision should be made by the House. On September 30, the House unanimously agreed to refer the matter to the Committee on Privileges and Elections (henceforth the Committee). The Committee was to determine the seating arrangement of the parties in the House and to define the status of the *Ralliement*. To speed up their party’s recognition, the *Ralliement* members decided to paralyze the business of the House, by delaying the passage of interim supply, even though the Committee had only met once. Realizing themselves the premature nature of their actions, they agreed to put an end to their filibuster two days later, provided the committee would speed up its proceedings and reach an agreement.

The Committee's report was finally ready for debate in the House on October 17. The committee reached "what looked surprisingly like a compromise decision" (Saywell, 1964, p. 84). It recommended:

...that the New Democratic party be seated next to the official Opposition because their membership was larger than that of either the other groups. Instead of ranking the other two by their numerical strength, the report recommended that the Social Credit party of eleven members led by Robert Thompson should have precedence in seating over the group of thirteen led by Caouette. The report did not refer to this group by name, questioned whether it should be recognized as a separate party, since its members had not been elected as such, and recommended their legal status should be studied by an officer of the House of Commons who should report to the Speaker. (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 223)

Needless to say, the Committee's recommendations were not well received by Caouette and his group. They accused the Liberals of having used their majority on the Committee (LIB + SC) to come up with a decision that was favorable to Thompson and his group in exchange for SC support (Huguet, 1986, p. 262). Also, the NDP put up a spirited defense against the notion that the House had the right to determine what the party designation of any group of members or any individual member should be. NDP MP Knowles moved that the report be sent back to the committee with instructions to recommend that members of the opposition parties should be seated in accordance with their numerical strength. Despite the support of PC and *Ralliement* members, the Knowles amendment was defeated on October 18 by a margin of 82-96 (*Debates*, October 18, 1963, pp. 3729-3730). As the debate continued on the motion of concurrence, a member of Caouette's group, Plourde (Quebec West), moved an amendment that read:

The house recognizes that the most elementary decency demands that it should not be up to the other political parties to decide which one of the two Social Credit groups is the Social Credit party, and proposes to leave it to the Social Credit members themselves to decide that point by a majority vote among the 23 Social Credit members. (*Debates*, October 21, 1963, p. 3797)

This motion was also defeated by a margin of 69-106 (*Debates*, October 21, 1963, p. 3798), with the PCs supporting Caouette's group.

Following this vote, the Liberal House leader moved a motion to adjourn the debate and the report of the Committee was finally adopted on October 21, 1963, on division without a recorded vote, "following assurances from Mr. Pickersgill that there was no difference between a group and a party" (Saywell, 1964, p. 85). This is how Pickersgill explained what transpired between him and Caouette just prior to the vote to adjourn the debate:

Caouette emerged from the chamber, almost breathless. He said he was as sick of the debate as I was, and it could be settled in a few minutes once the vote of the amendment was taken if I could solve a problem he had, as leader of the new group. He was overwhelmed with mail and visitors and needed an extra secretary and an additional room. I replied that I had no authority to provide either, to which he retorted that everybody knew I ran the place. I said he was wrong, but that I would be glad to have a word with the Speaker about his problem. He asked if I would really do that. I said "yes". He then assured me that, after the vote on the amendment was completed, the debate would be ended within minutes. (Pickersgill, 1986, pp. 228-229)

The result / outcome of this episode was:

The result was that Thompson and his group got the place nearer the Speaker; Caouette got his extra room and secretary and recognition of his group as a party. I had wanted Thompson to get the pride of place because his group had been more dependable in supporting the government in close votes than the *Créditistes*. As it turned out, I had managed to retain the good will of both leaders.

The resolution of the dispute between the two Social Credit groups ended the most difficult problem in managing the business of the House in that first session. That it had been resolved without my losing the good will of either Thompson or Caouette considerably reduced the risk of a defeat of the government in a close vote. However, as House leader, I had a continuing anxiety about making sure that the government's supporters were in the chamber when a vote was likely and that absentees were paired. Thanks, on several votes, to the support of the members of the Thompson group, the government was never defeated...(Pickersgill, 1986, p. 229)

These disputes almost paralyzed the work of Parliament before they were settled. However, thanks in big part to the political skills of the Liberal House leader Pickersgill, which one historian has described as being "remarkable" (English, 1990, p. 266), the end result played in the Liberals favour who were seen to have had strengthened their minority position (Saywell, 1964, p. 85). In essence, the Liberals had managed to not alienate the leadership of two small third parties that were crucial to their survival. By chance or by design, the Liberals had managed to make concessions, at a very low cost to them, to both Thompson and Caouette. Whether or not these concessions paid off in the end will be the object of our study in the second section of this chapter when we examine the issue of agenda control.

To sum up this section of the make-up of the House, following the SC Party split in early September 1963, the House seats were divided along the following lines:

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Liberal Party of Canada           | 129 |
| Progressive Conservative Party    | 95  |
| New Democratic Party              | 17  |
| <i>Ralliement des Cr ditistes</i> | 13  |
| Social Credit Party               | 11  |

The end result was that the Liberals could count on at least 128 voting Liberal members (Liberal Speaker not included in this count) during the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Therefore, they were only a few seats short of a majority (never more than five). The government could pass its bills and confidence tests with the help of only one opposition party; it had three to choose from in the first few months (from May 16 to August 2) and then, when the SC split occurred (in September), it had four opposition parties to choose from (until the end of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament). For its part, the official opposition (PC Party) needed the support of all of the other opposition parties to defeat the government. These particular circumstances led Pearson to admit in his memoirs that he, unlike his House leader, “was not really worried about a defeat in the House during the two years after 1963” (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 97).

Having just painted a clear picture of the make-up of the House, we will now attempt to assess the likelihood of the Liberals gaining parliamentary support from any of the opposition parties given the parties’ position on the left-right political spectrum, their past experiences of political cooperation, their respective policy views, and the intra-

party dynamics of each party. First, we need to examine the state of the governing Liberals and their leader.

### *The Liberal Party of Canada*

Following the 1963 general election, the Liberals were back in power after six years on the opposition benches with Pearson at the helm during the greater part of that period.<sup>66</sup> According to Moon (1963), Pearson took over the leadership of the party in 1958 with high expectations, which he failed to live up to, at least, initially. “No Canadian political figure has ever taken leadership of a national party with greater achievement and experience behind him than Pearson. None has been defeated more sweepingly in his first try at putting his party in power” (Moon, 1963, p. 3). As discussed in the previous chapter, Pearson’s mishandling of his first non-confidence motion in the House led in part to a PC victory of historic proportions in 1958. The subsequent PC majority government from 1958 to 1962 was a trying period for Pearson, who served as leader of the official opposition, and his party. However, as painful as that period may have been, Pearson emerged stronger and with the continued backing of his party.

Over the years [1958-1962], he had faced a Parliamentary majority greater than any other Opposition Leader and persevered until its very cabinet cracked open with a force made even more devastating by its surprise. He had faced his party’s organizational problem of large dimensions along with the uncertain danger of a labour supported third political movement, and he had unified the diversity of his own by a feat at least the equal to any of the compromises and solutions he had

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<sup>66</sup> Pearson was chosen leader of the Liberal Party of Canada on January 16, 1958.

hitherto achieved at international level. He had done this in only half a decade, by the ultimate and highest feat thus far of a great man's life. (Moon, 1963, pp. 59-60)

Despite a second electoral defeat in 1962, this time reducing the PCs to a minority government, Pearson was still very much in control of his party. While his detractors questioned his "toughness and the quality of his judgment" (Bliss, 1994, p. 218), they usually rallied around him. Much of the goodwill afforded to Pearson by the members of his party can be explained by his personality. According to McCall-Newman (1982), "They [his followers] forgave him his weaknesses as party leader not just because of the glorious reputation of his past but because of the warmth of his response to their needs as people" (p. 47). Other notable historians have noted, "Almost everyone did like Mike Pearson, the most amiable, charming, and self-deprecating prime minister since Macdonald. Many of his followers loved him deeply" (Bliss, 1994, p. 218). "He charmed, he excited, and he inspired his warriors the closer he brought them into battle" (English, 1990, p. 292).

It is perhaps this personality trait, Pearson's ability to bring together disparate views to achieve the greater common good that led to people following him and admiring him. As asserted by Hutchison (1964), "Pearson had failed to win a majority by the tantalizing margin of four seats. Still, if anyone could govern with a minority it should be the ex-diplomat who had wrestled so long, as the agent of a small nation, with the majority of mankind" (p. 379).

Notwithstanding these personality traits, what were his personal, political, and ideological convictions? Assessing Pearson's position on the left/right political spectrum will help us to determine his compatibility with other party leaders, and thus, the likelihood of cooperation in the House to pass bills and survive confidence tests. According to Newman (1968),

Lester Pearson's personal convictions did not anchor him in any specific position on the Canadian political spectrum. He never seemed to be in debate with himself about the distinctions between the political left and right. During one 1963 election rally he correctly predicted: "When the Liberals assume office, the government will make changes which may justify the opinion that we are left of centre. But we may also have to resist changes which would be harmful and premature, and this may leave us at times open to the charge that we are being right of centre." (p. 82)

Some have argued that in order to appreciate and understand Pearson, one has to look at the men who surrounded him. "Pearson surrounded himself with men of diverse ideas and contradictory advice. Rather than allow them to tug him this way and that, he sat in the middle, throwing now a crumb to one side, now to the other." (Donaldson, 1994: 221) To highlight the ideological diversity of Pearson's team, Donaldson (1994) added:

Walter Gordon provided much of the organizational talent behind Pearson Liberalism. He was a crusading economic nationalist. On the other hand Mitchell Sharp, who succeeded him as Finance Minister, was an internationalist and a Grit free-trader. Robert Winters was a Bay Street right-winger, reactionary as any Tory, and Jean Marchand was an anti-Duplessis Quebec union organizer, as left-wing as a New Democrat. (p. 221)

According to Jim Coutts (2003), Pearson along with Walter Gordon (Davenport) and Tom Kent formed the “Liberal triumvirate”: Kent was the primary author of the social policies and he managed the cabinet agenda while Pearson and Gordon steered the policies through cabinet and caucus (p. 12 & pp. 14-16). Gordon, who served as Pearson’s minister of finance from 1963 to 1965, was an economic nationalist. In his memoirs, Pearson stated that on the subjects of American economic dependency and on social security he found himself in full sympathy with Gordon’s views (Munro & Inglis, 1972, p. 90). However, looking back on the Pearson years, Pickersgill opined that Pearson was not an economic nationalist, but rather a status nationalist:

“He wanted the flag, the Order of Canada, ceremonial changes so Canadians could stop feeling like quasi-colonials. But he wasn’t interested in economic affairs. He wasn’t really that left-wing either. All the time he was in St. Laurent’s cabinet he never showed the slightest interest in what we were doing about old-age pensions or equalization payments. He was interested in international affairs and in the ideas of his ‘civilized’ friends, who ranged all over the ideological map.” (as cited in McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 45)

As for Kent, Pearson’s senior policy advisor, according to historian Michael Bliss (1994),

Kent...believed that the mission of modern Liberalism was to use the state to create greater social equality....Kent believed in expanding the public sector’s role to compensate for inequalities created by private-enterprise capitalism. The state should intervene more, control more, spend more – using its powers to make war against poverty and injustice just as it had made all-out war against fascism. (p. 223)

Kent and Gordon's influences were clearly reflected in the social, political, and economic agenda pursued by Pearson and his government. In short, as we will see, this agenda was innovative and left-leaning. In his memoirs, Pearson wrote that following the 1963 election there were many things that he wanted to accomplish:

to provide work for all in a context of financial stability; to complete the structure of social security with national pension and health plans; to bring about better relations between the levels of government so that our federalism would be strong and united; to make a new deal for French-speaking Canadians so that they might play a strong but distinctive part in Canada's development; to establish the symbols of a proud Canadian nation, above a national flag; and to move steadily toward a greater Canadian and lessened American control over the economic development of our nation. (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 84)

To sum up, despite two electoral defeats in 1958 and 1962 and a minority victory in 1963, Pearson had the backing of his party, despite some misgivings due to perceived personal failings. While by no means an ideologue, Pearson has been described as a centrist, a pragmatist, a nationalist, and an internationalist. Pearson's world view and his approach to politics should make it easier for him and his party to court and win the support of a greater diversity of parties on a wide spectrum of issues. In particular, the social reform agenda that the Liberals promised to pursue aligned them well with the left-leaning NDP (Russell, 2008, p. 31).

### *The New Democratic Party*

The 1963 general election was Douglas' second as leader of the NDP, a social democratic party created in 1961 with the merger of organized labour and the political left, namely the CCF. Douglas was chosen leader because of his success in Saskatchewan, where he served as the premier for 17 years, from 1944 to 1961 (McLeod & McLeod, 1987, p. 232). According to the 1963 *Annual Review*, while his party actually lost two seats in the 1963 general election, "No one in the NDP suggested that the party's indifferent showing was the fault of Mr. Douglas" (Saywell, 1964, p. 41). In fact, NDP party members unanimously reaffirmed Douglas' leadership at a party convention in Regina in August 1963.

On election night, Douglas reiterated his campaign promise to work with whichever party had the largest number of seats to get their program through Parliament (Saywell, 1964, p. 45). Shortly after the election, in a lengthy letter to the Premier of Saskatchewan, Woodrow Lloyd, Douglas provides some post-election analysis and articulates his strategy for the upcoming parliamentary session. As reported by Shackleton (1975), first, Douglas recognizes that "most Canadians would like a period of time in which we will be free from the uncertainty of federal elections" and, second, that the NDP needs time "to do basic organization work or to build up the financial resources necessary to put on an effective federal campaign" (p 274). As for his strategy in the House, Douglas states:

“My feeling is that we should take a positive and constructive position in the new Parliament. We should state that we want this to be a productive Parliament which will grapple effectively with some of our social and economic problems. We should make it clear that while we do not think either of the old-line parties are likely to go far enough to achieve the results which are desired, nevertheless we will support every measure that moves in the right direction.

It would be irresponsible for us to support ‘no confidence’ motions against Pearson when there is no alternative government in sight and when a federal election would in all probability only give the Liberals more seats, likely at our expense.

...If Pearson can bring down some fairly progressive legislation, and if the economic position improves in the next six months he may not be averse to finding a legitimate excuse for going to the country and asking for a clear majority to complete his program. It’s my opinion that in this eventuality we could be virtually wiped out, as would most of the Social Crediters in Quebec.

Our strategy should be to give Pearson no excuse for dissolving Parliament. Diefenbaker will probably carry on a program of constant obstruction and if Pearson decides to use this as an alibi for calling an election there is little we can do about it but the one thing we must do is provide him with that excuse ourselves and have to go to the country faced with the task of defending ourselves against charges of irresponsibility and doctrinaire obstruction.” (as cited in Shackleton, 1975: 274-275)

In short, the NDP position can be summarized by the following two statements: 1- avoid an election to buy some time to get organized and fill the party coffers and 2- work with the Liberals to implement a socially progressive agenda.

On the issue of working with the Liberals, on December 21, 1963, Mark Gayn broke a story in the *Toronto Star* of secret conversations at the top levels between NDP and Liberal spokesmen to explore the possibilities of finding common grounds and avenues of co-operation.

As recounted by Walter Gordon, the host of the Liberal/NDP “coalition summit”:

Naturally enough, there was considerable speculation when the Liberals were first elected about the possibility of the new minority government making a working arrangement with one of the smaller groups in the House. It was in this connection during the fall of 1963 that Keith Davey came to see me to say that he and Douglas Fisher of the N.D.P., whom he had known since college days, had had an off-the-cuff talk to see if there would be any possibility of the Liberals and the N.D.P. agreeing to some kind of formula for working together. He said Fisher seemed to be receptive and thought a few representatives of each party should meet to talk things over. I consulted Pearson about this, and while he did not expect anything would come of it, he thought we should explore the subject. It was agreed that we would meet quite informally in my apartment on a Sunday afternoon. Mike Pearson, Allan MacEachen, Keith Davey, and I were to represent the Liberals, and Tommy Douglas, Douglas Fisher and David Lewis the N.D.P. It transpired that neither Pearson nor MacEachen was able to come at the last moment. Pearson called my apartment to explain his absence to Tommy Douglas and apologize for it. However, his failure to appear may have raised suspicions in the minds of the visiting N.D.P.’ers. Tommy Douglas said very little, and David Lewis made it clear he would oppose any kind of working arrangement with the Liberals. Pearson, with his authority as Prime Minister and his talent for negotiation, just might have been able to produce a plan that would have appealed to them, but Davey and I were not able to make much progress. It was a friendly meeting, but nothing came of it. (Gordon, 1977, p. 178)

Within weeks, word of this meeting was leaked out. Other newspaper outlets picked up the story and there were constant references to a Liberal-NDP merger in the House during debates throughout the life of this Parliament, mostly by PCs, complaining that the NDP and Liberals were conspiring and conniving together.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For an example of this, see *Debates*, February 26, 1964, pp. 273-275.

In the end, no such merger ever took place. In any case, as pointed out by authors McLeod and McLeod (1987), “the NDP caucus found it easy to support much of what the government was doing. Left-wing Liberals such as Tom Kent and Walter Gordon had reached the peak of their influence, backed by an activist core of civil servants and a swelling federal treasury” (p. 237).

### *The Progressive Conservative Party*

The party that was least likely to support the Liberals was the PC Party. With 95 seats, it formed the official opposition. The 1963 general election came after a 9-month tumultuous minority PC government under the leadership of John G. Diefenbaker. Diefenbaker’s government fell on February 5, 1963, on a motion of non-confidence moved by the then leader of the official opposition (Pearson). The final cabinet meeting at 24 Sussex Drive before the government fell on February 3, 1963, has been described by historian Michael Bliss (1994), as “probably the most tumultuous in Canadian history” (p. 211). According to the same author,

Ministers shouted and swore at one another, called each other liars, sons of bitches, shits. Harkness [Minister of National Defence] resigned. King Lear at bay, Diefenbaker raged and pounded the table, said he was resigning, and stormed out. So did several of his followers. One of the cooler heads noted that they soon would not have a Cabinet left to fight an election. At least two ministers described the Prime Minister as seeming like a “raging lunatic”. (p. 211)

The specific issues that caused such dramatic and emotional reactions from the participants were the LPC’s reversal on nuclear war heads and Diefenbaker’s

“continued inability to articulate any defence policy of his own” (Newman, 1968, p. 6). However, the broader issue, and probably the most important, was the issue of Diefenbaker’s leadership. This issue dogged him throughout the life of the 1962-1965 Liberal minority government and beyond, right up until his ouster by his own party members in 1967.

The disintegration of the Diefenbaker cabinet in 1963 was so complete and Diefenbaker’s personal approval was so low amongst political elites that on election day 1963, the lead editorial in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* stated, as reported by Beal (1964):

“Mr. Diefenbaker has destroyed the Conservative Party”, it said. “This great nation is in peril because it has been betrayed by an indolent and indecisive leader who would not lead, by a man who clung, and would still cling, to an office which he does not have the capacity to fill.” (pp. 5-6)

The PC Party did indeed go down to defeat in 1963. It lost a total of 21 seats and saw its popular vote reduced by 4.5 percentage points. Moreover, as an indication of the overall lack of cohesion within the party and dissatisfaction with the leader, many prominent members had resigned prior to the election call or simply decided not to run. The end result according to Plamondon (2009) is that shortly after the 1963 general election, “the obituaries of the Diefenbaker era began to pour in” (p. 255). As for Diefenbaker’s future as party leader, there were repeated demands for a leadership convention (Saywell, 1964, p. 40). However, “with no provision in the constitution of the PC party requiring a leadership review – even after an election

defeat – and with Diefenbaker showing no signs of retirement, those who wanted a change in leadership had a fight on their hands” (Plamondon, 2009, p. 255). So began a period of internecine war within the PC Party which only ended upon Diefenbaker’s forced resignation as party leader in 1967. By all accounts, immediately following the general election of 1963 and throughout the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Diefenbaker had a tenuous grasp on his party and his future seemed always to be hanging in the balance. But, as we will see, this situation did not preclude Diefenbaker from voting non-confidence in the Pearson government at every opportunity afforded to him in a bid to regain power.

### *The Social Credit Party*

As for the two smallest parties in the House, the SC Party and the *Ralliement*, much has been said already about their intra-party dynamics. We have already discussed the Liberal concessions to give precedence to the SC Party in the House and provide the *Ralliement* with additional resources. Given their internal dynamics and their lack of resources (both financial and human) to fight another general election, it is reasonable to expect that these two parties would do everything in their power to avoid yet another election. That said, what about their willingness to cooperate with the Liberals to pass their agenda?

For his part, the leader of the SC Party pledged to work with the government to ensure that Parliament functioned well. According to the 1963 *Annual Review*, “Mr.

Thompson told reporters at Toronto airport on April 9 that he would support the party in power: 'we certainly can't have another election now, and anybody who forces one will not be too popular with the electorate'" (as cited in Saywell, 1964, p. 45).

According to Mackay (2005), while Thompson was conservative in orientation, he got along better with Pearson than with Diefenbaker (pp. 98-99). Thompson (1990) corroborates this assertion in his memoirs when he states:

In contrast to the one short meeting I had with Prime Minister Diefenbaker, with whom I shared much political common ground, Prime Minister Pearson and I met often, sometimes even biweekly. For five years [1963-1968] I regularly walked into Pearson's office, usually past waiting guests or reporters. Not once was my presence questioned by the media, nor was it ever suggested that we were conniving together. This cooperation existed in spite of major policy differences and sometimes sharp disagreements. During these years of intense interaction we developed a mutual respect for each other. To his credit, Pearson never suggested that I consider a coalition or walk the floor to accept a Cabinet position. (p. 114)

Also in his memoirs, Thompson (1990) describes Pearson in glowing terms stating that Pearson was "good natured, sincere, and likeable" and that he was "a team player who drew spontaneous loyalty and support from his Cabinet and from party officials" (p. 112 & pp. 113-114). Pearson and Thompson shared similar Christian convictions and their "friendship was based on Pearson's diplomatic experience with Ethiopia and Thompson's missionary tenure there" (Mackay, 2005, p. 87). As we will see later in this chapter, this personal relationship based on mutual respect will

enable these two leaders and their respective parties to work together during the life of this Parliament.

As for the *Ralliement* led by the charismatic and populist R  al Caouette, while the results of the 1963 general election were considered by many as a defeat (it was expected that he would win over 60 seats in Quebec), receiving official recognition in the House (along with the \$4,000 leader's stipend) was seen as a victory (Rousseau and Chauss  , 1976, pp. 114-115). Given the painful episode of the split with the other social creditors led by Thompson and given their precarious financial position, it is reasonable to conclude that the *Ralliement* was in no hurry to go back to the polls anytime soon. On issues reinforcing Canada's fiscal and monetary position and on those advancing the cause of French Canadians, Pearson could count on the *Ralliement's* support. For example, the *Ralliement* was supportive of Pearson's call for adopting *O'Canada* as the country's official anthem, a distinctive Canadian flag, and creating a commission on bilingualism and biculturalism. As for all other issues, support would be given or withheld on an *ad hoc* basis.

### *Summary*

Our preliminary analysis reveals that Pearson (1) enjoyed strong bargaining power. The PC Party was in disarray and Diefenbaker's leadership was being openly challenged. An internecine war within the social credit movement led to a schism in the SC Party, thus creating a new entity in the House: the *Ralliement des*

*Créditistes*. Given that elections were held in 1962 and 1963, no party, except perhaps the PC Party, wanted another election. The SC Party, the *Ralliement*, and the NDP were seemingly willing and prepared to work with the government on common priorities, so the Liberals had many partners to choose from to implement their agenda. Everything seemed to be in place for a productive Parliament. Was this the case?

In the following section, we will assess the government's control of the agenda once the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament was convened on May 16, 1963. Agenda control is a key determinant of a government's ability to survive confidence tests and pass its legislative proposals.

## **II      Agenda Control**

In this section, we will examine the House business of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, including the SFT, budget, legislative program, and supply motions of each session. These sub-sections will be for the most part descriptive in nature. However, we will provide at the end of this section an overall summary and assessment of the three sessions in order to determine Pearson (1)'s agenda control.

The 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament sat for a total of 418 days spread over 3 sessions. We will focus our attention more on the first session because, in hindsight, it set the tone for

the other two sessions. During the first session, many of the important intra- and interparty power-plays occurred, voting patterns were established, and the most serious threats to the government's survival occurred. As stated by the Liberal House leader during the first session: "Throughout 1963 [first session] we had frequently come close to losing control of Parliament and the survival of the government was always in question" (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 249).

This is not to say that it was smooth sailing for the government during the second and third sessions. By virtue of the length of the second session alone, the confidence of the House in the government was tested at least 10 times. Plus, the year 1964 (second session) was one of the most tumultuous and acrimonious sessions in political memory due in large part to the emotional flag debate, which consumed Parliament and parliamentarians. Finally, the period from November 1964 and July 1965, the period covering the end of the second session and the third session, has been described by Richard Gwyn, author of the *Shape of Scandal* (1965) as an "eruption of squalid scandals which ranged from cut-rate furniture purchases to questionable campaign contributions, to allegations of attempted bribery by high government officials" (inside book cover). Notwithstanding these facts, we will examine the first session in more detail than the two following sessions.

First Session, 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
May 16 to December 21, 1963

The first session of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament lasted 53 days. During this period, the government introduced one SFT, one budget, and a total of 41 bills in the House. The main opposition party, the PC Party, put forward 6 supply motions in total, forever trying to topple the government at every turn.

*Speech from the Throne*

The SFT was read on May 16 – only 24 days after Pearson (1) took office. The 1963 *Annual Review* reported that it was “one of the shortest speeches from the throne on record” (Saywell, 1964, p. 50). For his part, Mitchell Sharp, Minister of Trade and Commerce, described it as “reasonably brief and straightforward” (Sharp, 1994, p. 112). While it was short on details, it was long on commitments, such as establishing a commission on the bicultural character of Canada, fostering the spirit of cooperative federalism in the federal government’s relations with the provinces, and seeking solutions to international problems by diplomacy and negotiation.

In its first SFT following the general election, the government attempted to flesh out some of the details of its campaign promise to move quickly on its major commitments in the first sixty days – the “60 days of decision” as it became known.

Since the SFT identified unemployment as “the most urgent of our domestic problems”, its main focus was on introducing measures “to increase employment and production in Canada” (*Debates*, May, 16 1963, pp. 6-7). They included commitments to: increase federal responsibility for technical training; establish a department of industry; strengthen the Atlantic Development Board; establish a municipal development and loan board; amend the *National Housing Act*; establish a Canada development corporation; establish an economic council of Canada; develop the Columbia River; create a new Department of Agriculture with two ministers; establish a twelve mile limit offshore for the use of Canadian fisheries; establish a comprehensive system of contributory pensions; introduce legislation on unemployment insurance; establish a commission to the redistribution of electoral districts; amend the *Citizenship Act*; and, review Canada’s immigration policy. Finally, the SFT also included commitments to establish a special committee of the House to examine defense problems; to task the standing committee on privileges and elections to review the *Canada Elections Act*; and, to establish a committee on procedure, to be chaired by the Speaker of the House, aimed at “strengthening Parliament and making it more effective” (*Debates*, May, 16 1963, pp. 6-7).

The general debate on the speech lasted for eight days. Two motions of non-confidence were tabled, one from the PCs and one from the NDP. In their responses to the speech, party leaders took the opportunity to comment not only on the content of the speech but also on the minority situation in the House and how

the parties should conduct themselves. For example, in his Address in Reply, the Prime Minister said:

To the members of other parties in the house I say, Mr. Speaker, that in order to move forward the business of the country and the business of the house with the greatest possible expedition and effectiveness, which I am sure is the desire of all hon. members, the government will not be looking to any members of any party or group to give up any rights, or to act in any way against individual conscience or party principle. This government is not inviting any special arrangements and will not indulge in any special manoeuvres in order to remain in office. We do not believe that that is necessary or desirable. (Pearson, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 55)

For his part, the leader of the official opposition expressed his desire to see this Parliament work better than the previous one (25<sup>th</sup> Parliament) which he led as prime minister and which he felt the opposition parties had treated unjustly.

I hope this parliament will be an effective one. I hope no action will be taken by any member to degrade in any way this institution. I can assure the government that there will be no repetition of those things that took place last December, when from one end of Canada to the other there was condemnation against the opposition of that day for their attitude and action in refusing to allow the prime minister of Canada to speak in this chamber. The attitude of this party will be to do everything it can to make strong and effective its contribution to the bettering of the welfare of our country. (Diefenbaker, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 42)

The leader of the SC Party took the occasion to lecture Parliament as to the responsibilities of parliamentarians in a democratically elected minority parliament.

A minority government can be a strong government. It can be effective and it can be stable if the members who make up Parliament will put their responsibilities ahead of the politics which they are too often prone to play and if the man who is entrusted with the leadership of the Government will give the leadership which a minority house requires. We did not have that in 1962. We hope we will have it in 1963. Not only do

we hope for this but so does the entire nation hope as well. (Thompson, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 68)

Similarly, the leader of the NDP preached cooperation as the key to making this minority parliament work.

The opposition parties, in my view, have a responsibility to refrain from all forms of frivolous obstruction and to give the government a chance to bring down its program for economic recovery.

I submit, on the other hand, that the government has a responsibility to tackle the problems which confront it with dispatch and to refrain from making any major policy decisions without reference to parliament. I think the people of Canada as a whole want a respite from elections; but the onus for that lies on both sides of the house. The members of the New Democratic party in this house are prepared to give the government a chance to carry out its domestic program for economic recovery, but on the other hand we expect the government to consult parliament rather than treating it with contempt. We can have in this country a period of stable government only if there is a degree, a high degree, of co-operation from all parties in this house. (Douglas, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 72)

As for the specific legislative measures put forward by the government in its SFT, opposition parties expressed general approval. Diefenbaker delivered a lengthy speech which reads more like a defense of his two administrations (1958-1962 and 1962-1963) and a continuation of the issues debated during the last election campaign than a critique of the government's SFT. However, he did offer the Liberals some "constructive" criticisms over their proposed agenda. In the end, while Diefenbaker was comfortable with many of the Liberal proposals, as he had championed many of them himself at one time, he found the speech wanting in many regards.

I have pointed out that there is very little in the speech from the throne excepting for the fact that certain things which we advanced are again being brought forward under new names. Beyond that, the imagination which was spoken of so generously and for so long by the former opposition is conspicuously absent. (Diefenbaker, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, pp. 51-52)

In closing, he repeated this same message, stating:

In summary, may I say that many of the measures set out in the speech from the throne are simply a rehash of legislation that we had available and before parliament, with the added benefit of having a new name but which, taken together, do not constitute the kind of program which Canadians had hoped for and had reason to expect. (Diefenbaker, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 54)

As a consequence, Diefenbaker moved the following amendment:

While recognizing that Canada's economic growth during the year 1962 exceeded that of any country in the western world, this house regrets that many of the pledges made by the Prime Minister and his colleagues have not been incorporated in the government's declaration of intention as outlined in the speech from the throne, and further regrets that the policies announced fail to provide full opportunity for the people of Canada to continue the social advance and large economic growth of the past year. (Diefenbaker, *Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 54)

On May 23, 1963, the House divided on the amendment which was voted down on the following division: Yeas 76 and Nays 147.<sup>68</sup> The PCs were unable to get any support outside of their caucus for this motion. SC and NDP members voted with the Liberals.

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<sup>68</sup> See Appendix G for a record of the key votes that occurred during the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

Not only did the SC Party not support the PC amendment, it did not even attempt to modify it in any way via a sub-amendment. Thompson stated: “It is the intention of the Social Credit party that we will not resort to criticism just for criticism’s sake” (*Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 67). Instead, Thompson and his party adopted a wait-and-see approach: “Several measures in the speech from the throne are good and they will have our unqualified support and approval as they are brought before us in legislative form” (*Debates*, May 20, 1963, p. 68).

As for the NDP, while it was comfortable with the general direction of the speech, it decided to focus its attention on the issue of nuclear arms, an issue that had badly divided the last Parliament. It moved the following amendment:

That the amendment be amended by deleting therefrom all the words after the word “address” and by substituting therefore the following words: We regret that Your Excellency’s advisers have indicated their intention of acquiring nuclear arms for Canadians forces, thereby lessening the chances for nuclear disarmament and increasing the danger of nuclear war. (Douglas, *Debates*, May 21, 1963, p. 85)

On May 21, 1963, the House divided on the amendment which was voted down on the following division: Yeas 113 and Nays 124. The government came very close to being defeated. The NDP received the support of the PC caucus and a majority of the SC caucus (17 in total plus one Independent SC). However, two PCs and four Socreds (including Thompson) voted with the Liberals.

### *Gordon's first budget – June 13, 1963*

On June 13, 1963, 52 days after Pearson (1) took office, the government tabled its first budget. This would be the first of three budgets introduced by Finance Minister Walter Gordon during the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, and, it was by far, the most controversial of the three.

The 1963 budget contained proposals aimed at stimulating the economy to create more jobs, closing loopholes in tax laws, bringing the national finances under control, and dealing with the problems of foreign investment (Gordon, 1977, pp.143-144).<sup>69</sup> The overall reaction to the budget was mostly negative and many of the specific budget proposals were harshly criticized, in particular, the proposed 30% takeover tax on sales of Canadian companies to non-residents.

On the 1963 budget, Pearson wrote in his memoirs:

Seldom has a budget been so universally condemned, with the thrust of the attack against the tax designed to protect us from American takeovers. It was not the purpose that was attacked but the amount of the tax, which was castigated as impracticable and unfairly discriminating. I do not think I have ever known in my years in Ottawa anything quite so violent and so bitterly hostile to a particular clause in any budget. (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 107)

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<sup>69</sup> See *Debates*, June 13, 1963, pp. 996-1029; see also Gordon (1977) Chapter 8: The 1963 Budget, pp. 134-156.

However, it was not only the content of the budget that caused a storm in Parliament, but also the method of its preparation (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 200). The opposition complained bitterly about the propriety of bringing in outside consultants, the “three bright boys”, as they were labeled, to help in the preparation of the budget (Saywell, 1964, p. 54). (The issue of outside assistance in preparing the budget was first raised in the House by the member from Port Arthur, NDP MP Douglas Fisher.)

Opposition both inside and outside the House to the measures proposed by Gordon was so fierce that some of them had to be abandoned. As recalled by Pearson in his memoirs, “I remember him [Gordon] coming to see me soon after to discuss what should be done. I said: ‘Well, we’ll have to think it over but it seems to me some changes are going to get out of this.’ We were a minority government and could not ride out the storm without making concessions.” (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 107)

On June 19 (six days after introducing the budget) Gordon announced the withdrawal of the 30% takeover tax. (The real debate on the budget began on June 19, after this announcement.) However, the withdrawal of the takeover tax by the government did not dissuade the official opposition from moving an amendment of non-confidence against the government for the way it had prepared the budget and

for the proposals it contained. George Nowlan (Digby-Annapolis-Kings), the PC finance critic, moved the following amendment:

That this House regrets that the Minister of Finance by failing to maintain the constitutional practice of the essential secrecy of the budget has seriously weakened public confidence;

That in general his proposals will endanger and curtail the expansion of the economy:

That the imposition of a sales tax on certain building materials and machinery and apparatus to be used on manufacture or production is to be condemned as a retrograde and inexcusable action and

That the proposals purporting to bring about desirable control by Canadians over the economy will fail by their very nature to achieve that object and will result in deterioration of Canada's international relations. (*Debates*, June 19, 1963, p. 1356)

The following day, on June 20, on the 60<sup>th</sup> day of decision, Gordon offered his resignation to Pearson, but it was refused. As noted by Saywell (1964), "The ties of long-standing friendship, the sense of deep personal and political obligation, and perhaps the feeling that old-timers in the party had not always helped the novice as they might were far too strong" (p. 56).

While the other opposition parties, the SC Party and the NDP, were equally unimpressed with the Liberal budget. Thompson stated that "this budget has been the biggest disappointment of any budget introduced in recent years" (*Debates*, June 26, 1963, p. 1611). However, neither the SC Party nor the NDP supported the PC motion. In fact, they did not even move a sub-amendment to the PC amendment. In the end, the PC motion was defeated 73 to 113. While most

members of the SC Party stayed away from the vote, 10 did vote with the Liberals. This prompted Diefenbaker to chastise the SC Party later for “swallow[ing] their beliefs by voting for the budget”. “Let me say to my hon. friends that their conduct in the last few weeks has shown they have become a dilapidated annex of the Liberal party” (*Debates*, July 25, 1963, p. 2618).

As for the NDP, it did not vote on the PC amendment expressing lack of confidence in the government over the budget. Douglas explained his party’s position prior to the vote by stating:

On the other hand, on March 27 last on a national television program, I made a commitment to the people of this country that if a minority government were elected in Canada we would give that minority government, whichever party formed it, a reasonable period of time in which to carry out its program for economic recovery. This government has not yet had a reasonable period of time. They have not yet made much use of the time they have had. However, we believe they are entitled to a reasonable period of time. Therefore we find ourselves in a dilemma. We are not prepared to vote confidence in this budget or in the manner of its presentation. On the other hand, the amendment moved by the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings (Mr. Nowlan) is not only a statement of opinion, with which opinion we largely agree, but written into that amendment is the provision that the government should be turned out that a general election should be held.

We do not believe the people of this country want an election. This would be the third general election in 15 months. We believe that the people of this country want his parliament to get on with the job of governing Canada. For that reason, we of the New Democratic party will abstain from voting on this amendment.

By abstaining from voting we are saying to the government that we are prepared to see you stay in office in the hope that you will do something to implement the promises you made to the people of Canada. But by abstaining, we are also stating that we have no confidence in this budget, that we will not be associated with this dismal budget and the disastrous consequences which we believe will flow from its implementation. (*Debates*, June 24, 1963, pp. 1520-1521)

When the final vote on the budget occurred on June 26, 1963, it passed by a vote of 119 to 74. Once again the NDP abstained and seventeen SC members voted with the Liberals, while the only Independent SC member (Marcoux – Montmorency) voted with the PCs.

On July 8, Gordon succumbed to pressure within cabinet and caucus, from opposition parties and outside stakeholders, and brought in new resolutions to the *Income Tax Act* and the *Excise Tax Act* (i.e., revised version of budget).

I announced a number of changes but by far the most important was to bring in the sales tax on building materials in stages. Another change was to permit companies to qualify as having “a degree of Canadian ownership” if twenty-five per cent of their stock was made available for purchase by Canadians, even though Canadians might not have actually acquired the shares in question. As was to be expected, I was accused of introducing a new budget and ridiculed accordingly. It was a humiliating experience. (Gordon, 1977, pp. 152-153)

According to Tom Kent (1988), with the benefit of hindsight, “The Prime Minister [Pearson] himself asserted, in a letter to Senator Crerar on 9 July 1963, that the basic mistake ‘was to have attempted to produce a budget at all in such a short time’.” (Kent, 1988, p. 236) In the end, according to D. Smith (1973), “The government was never in danger of defeat on the budget resolution....But in spirit it had been badly shaken, and the end of the budget debate did not promise great relief” (p. 169). According to English (1990), one outcome of the 1963 budget fiasco

was that in its aftermath “[Pearson] promised he would keep the party “where it should be – left of centre” (p. 276).

### *Legislative Program*

As for the government’s legislative program for the first session, in total, it introduced 41 government bills and managed to pass 34 of them.<sup>70</sup> According to the then Liberal House leader,

When the session was prorogued, every priority item on Pearson’s list of the business the government hoped to have completed had been disposed of by the House, except for two or three measures the government had postponed because the cabinet was not ready to proceed with them....In addition, all but one or two of the less urgent measures before Parliament had been adopted. (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 244)

The first session can be divided into two parts: spring/summer and fall. Before the adjournment of the first part on August 3, 1963, four major pieces of economic legislation were passed, which, according to D. Smith (1973), “had been dominant in the Liberal party’s electoral program” (p. 180). Moreover, the government could point to the following accomplishments:

The Department of Industry, the Economic Council of Canada, and the Municipal Loan Fund had been created, the Atlantic Development Board had been transformed from an advisory to an executive agency...to assist industrial growth in the four eastern provinces. A parliamentary committee on defence had been appointed under the chairmanship of Maurice Sauvé, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

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<sup>70</sup> See Appendix H for a list of the government bills passed by Pearson (1).

had been established, salaries and allowances for MPs had been raised from \$10,000 to \$18,000 a year. (D. Smith, 1973, pp. 180-181)

As for the second part (fall 1963), it had also been productive. By the time the House broke for Christmas recess on December 21, 1963, and the first session was prorogued, "Parliament had increased the old age pension, imposed a system of public trusteeship on the maritime unions as recommended in the report of the Norris Royal Commission, completed its adoption of the budget measures, and approved the Estimates for all government spending in the current fiscal year" (D. Smith, 1973, p. 191).

Overall, during the first session, considerable legislation had been passed (Saywell, 1964, p. 90). Even opposition members expressed their satisfaction with the work accomplished during the first session. PC finance critic Nowlan gave this candid history of the first session, as quoted in the 1963 *Annual Review*:

"We started in a rough parliament last spring. I think it is true that the Tories were mad and the Liberals were cocky, and it took us a while to get adjusted. But following the series of disasters which they faced, we felt better and I doubt whether any parliament has worked better than this one has in the last few weeks or months since we came back from the summer recess." (as cited in Saywell, 1964, p. 90)

The leader of the NDP was as equally blunt and full of praise in his remarks when he stated in the House:

It began in uncertain circumstances. It could easily have been a most unproductive parliament. I think history may well show that it has been a

remarkably productive parliament, though a parliament in which no party had a clear majority. I think this has been due to the fine co-operation which has existed in all parts of the House and to the diplomacy and patience of the Secretary of State [Pickersgill], who has been leader of the House for the government, and to our patience in putting up with him. (Douglas, *Debates*, Dec. 21, 1963, p. 6374)

### *Supply Motions*

The obvious goodwill displayed by the opposition parties in seeing the government's agenda through did not prevent the official opposition from introducing six opposition supply motions during the first session. These six opposition motions generated 10 votes (tests of confidence) in total, including votes on amendments (and sub-amendments) to the original motion. These opposition motions pertained to various issues, such as economic policies, feed grain, labour relations, defence projects, unemployment, and federal-provincial relations. However, not one of these tests of confidence posed a real threat to the government's survival. All motions and amendments were easily defeated except for one motion and amendment on the lack of consultations on matters under provincial jurisdiction, which was also agreed to by the government. On this particular issue, the government maintained that the motion was not a matter of confidence. Throughout the 10 votes, the Liberals received the support of different parties (e.g., SC, NDP, PC) and/or individual members sitting as Independents or simply not voting with their caucus. Much of the credit for this went to the Liberal House leader Pickersgill. As one political scientist underlined at the time: "Mr. Pickersgill, who acts as House leader, has been far more considerate of the opposition than anyone had dared to hope" (Beck,

1964, p. 474). As previously mentioned, a more thorough analysis of all the votes taken during the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament will be provided at the end of this section.

Second Session, 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
February 18, 1964 to April 3, 1965

The second session of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament sat for a total of 248 days – the then longest session in Canadian history. During this period, the government introduced one SFT, one budget, and a total of 42 bills in the House. The main opposition party, the PC Party, put forward 3 supply motions. This session was dominated by debate on the pension plan, a new flag, and allegations of government malfeasance.

*Speech from the Throne*

The 1964 SFT was even less wordy than the 1963 SFT. It was short, to the point and not very flashy. The 1964 *Annual Review* described it as being “grey as the February skies” (Saywell, 1965, p. 13). It set out the government’s priorities for the upcoming session, which included, on the international front, commitments to continue to work for peace and disarmament abroad and to submit to Parliament for its approval legislation recognizing the Roosevelt-Campobello international park, the Columbia River treaty and protocol, and a new defence policy. On the domestic front, the speech focused on measures to further increase employment and raise the standard of living by seeking Parliament’s approval of the following measures:

railway legislation, a federal labour code, a Canadian pension plan, loans to university students, amendments to the *National Housing Act*, changes in the fiscal arrangements with the provinces, a ministry of rural development, a twelve-mile fisheries limit, strengthening the position of periodicals published in Canada, and amendments to the *Citizenship Act*. The speech also included measures to strengthen political institutions, including the redistribution of electoral districts, limits on election campaign expenses, compulsory retirement from the Senate, and measures to reorganize the structure of government (*Debates*, February 18, 1964, pp. 1-2).

Diefenbaker was unimpressed. Quoting Abraham Lincoln, he described the speech “As thin as the homeopathic soup that was made by boiling the shadow of a pigeon that had been starved to death” (*Debates*, February 20, 1964, p. 43). On February 20, 1964, Diefenbaker moved the following amendment, referring back to a measure included in the 1963 budget:

But we respectfully regret that Your Excellency’s advisers have failed to propose the repeal of the 11 per cent sales tax imposed as a result of action by the present government in 1963, on certain building materials and certain machinery and apparatus to be used in manufacture or production which is, and will continue to be, detrimental to various segments of the Canadian economy. (*Debates*, February 20, 1964, p. 53)

The PC amendment was defeated by a slim margin of only 8 votes, 120 to 128. Voting with the Liberals were Thompson and two followers, as well as Frank Howard

(Skeena)<sup>71</sup> and Reid Scott (Danforth) of the NDP. According to the 1964 *Annual Review*, Howard had earlier declared that he would not vote to dissolve Parliament, and after the vote Scott told journalists that

...an election now would be a calamity, for it would pit English against French with disastrous consequences for the whole country. The vote tonight is really a vote on whether or not to dissolve Parliament, and in my view the division appeared so close that one vote either way could make the difference. I felt it more important to try to keep Parliament functioning than to again demonstrate my opposition to the Sales Tax. (Saywell, 1965, p. 16)

As for the NDP reaction to the SFT, Douglas stated: "One of the things that has impressed me most about the speech from the throne is its colossal failure to say anything about the problem of insufficient economic growth and unemployment" (*Debates*, February 20, 1964, p. 67). Therefore, he moved:

That the following words be added to the amendment immediately at the end thereof: This house also regrets that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to make provision for federal participation, in co-operation with the provinces, in a government sponsored and government operated medicare program for all Canadians." (*Debates*, February 20, 1964, p. 70)

This NDP amendment only received the support of the PC Party and was defeated 87 to 134. Caouette and Thompson voted with the Liberals.

Anticipating Liberal legislation, the PCs decided to move a second amendment, regretting that the government had "failed to propose the extension of family

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<sup>71</sup> On many occasions, throughout the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Howard broke ranks with his party and voted with the government.

allowances to children 16 to 18 years of age who still attend school” (*Debates*, February 26, 1964, p. 267). This amendment prompted the *Ralliement* group to move a sub-amendment of their own regretting the government had failed to propose “at the same time a general increase in family allowances according to the cost of living index” (*Debates*, February 26, 1964, p. 278). The *Ralliement* sub-amendment was easily defeated 25 to 222, only convincing 14 New Democrats to support it (excluding Howard and Scott who once again deserted their party). As for the PC amendment, while it received the support of 11 *Ralliement* members and 14 New Democrats, it also was defeated but by a much closer margin (113 to 134). On this vote, the Liberals received the support of 10 SC members, one Independent SC, and two New Democrats (Howard and Scott).

The debate on the Address in Reply and the subsequent votes highlights the importance of the SC Party – and other independent-minded members of the opposition – whose support allowed the government to move forward with its agenda. As pointed out by Maurice Côté, SC MP from Chicoutimi:

The Liberal party is still in office this morning, but it owes its narrow victory to the intelligent co-operation of a certain number of members of this house who realize how important it is for our country, in its present situation, to have a truly democratic government which must look after the common weal.” (*Debates*, February 28, 1964, p. 356)

It also shows that not all parties vote like monolithic blocs, and that rallying all members of a political formation to vote cohesively on a crucial vote is not always easy.

### *Gordon's second budget – March 16, 1964*

“Good”, “safe”, “prudent”, and “non-controversial” were the words used to describe Gordon’s second budget, which he read in the House on March 16, 1964 (D. Smith, 1973, pp. 196-197). Gordon, himself, stated in his memoirs that his budget “proposed very few changes” (Gordon, 1977, p. 178). Unlike his first budget, Gordon did not need to withdraw any measures or reintroduce a revised version of the budget.

According to D. Smith (1973), in his budget speech,

The Minister of Finance reviewed the year’s improvements in production, employment and the balance of payments, and made optimistic predictions for the future, while noting the continuing problems of regional and structural unemployment which required specialized rather than general responses. The only notable features of the budget were an extension of family allowances to sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds still attending school, and an adjustment downwards of the 1963 proposal for the withholding tax on dividends of foreign controlled companies from twenty percent to fifteen percent. (pp. 196-197)

The PC finance critic, moved his party’s amendment to the budget, which regretted “that the government has failed to take any effective action to control increasing expenditures and its failure so to do, despite increased taxation imposed at the last session, has resulted in a substantial deficit” (*Debates*, March 19, 1964, p. 1266).

When the vote was taken on March 24, 1964, the PC stood alone and their amendment was defeated 80 to 150. The three other opposition parties voted with the Liberals.

However, the NDP moved a sub-amendment to the PC amendment, which regretted “that the government has failed to take any effective action to reduce defence expenditures so as to provide substantial savings which could be used for economic development in Canada and for increased aid to developing countries through the United Nations and its specialized agencies” (*Debates*, March 19, 1964, p. 1271).

This amendment was also defeated 20 to 180. While the NDP (minus Howard) were able to convince eight *Ralliement* members to vote with them, they were unable to secure the support of the PCs. Before the vote was taken on March 20, 1964, Diefenbaker rose to state that his party would vote against the NDP sub-amendment because it had “the effect of removing the essence of our amendment. If we were to support it we would, in effect, be voting against our own amendment” (*Debates*, March 20, 1964, p. 1318).

## *Legislative Program*

As for the government's legislative program for the second session, in total, it introduced 42 government bills and managed to pass all but two of them.

This session was dominated primarily by one issue: the flag debate. Pearson had promised during the 1963 general election that a Liberal government would replace the Red Ensign with a new distinctive Canadian flag. In total, there were 37 days of debate spread over 6 months; 308 speeches were delivered in the House (the PCs 210, the Liberals 50, the *Ralliement* 9, the NDP 24, and the Socreds 15); and, 221 members spoke, some more than 3 times. In the end, at 2:15 in the morning of December 14, a new flag was adopted by the House in a vote of 163 yeas to 78 nays (Cohen, 2008, p. 167). On this issue, like on many others, the Liberals were supported by the SC Party, the *Ralliement*, and the NDP. The PCs were steadfast in their opposition to the introduction of the new flag. It should be noted that votes related to the flag debate were not deemed confidence matters.

Although the flag debate had consumed much of House's time there had also been some major achievements. When it recessed for Christmas 1964, the House had passed the following legislative items: "student loans and extension of family allowances, redistribution, integration of the armed services, approval of the Columbia Treaty, partial discussion of the pension plan, the twelve-mile limit,

measures to aid farmers, and the unveiling of a national labour code, among many other minor items” (Saywell, 1965, p. 44).

The second session of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament had been the longest in Canadian history, and, as pointed out by NDP MP Fisher, “despite the government’s minority position it had been one of the most productive” (as cited in Saywell, 1966, p. 16).

### *Supply Motions*

In the second session, the opposition parties only moved 3 supply motions, compared to 6 in the previous session. Once again, all three were moved by the official opposition, the PCs. However, it should be noted that the opposition parties did raise many grievances in the House from the period of April to September 1964 on such issues as national transportation policy, income tax (charitable donations), alleged government interference with the C.B.C, and government failure to meet problems. On these occasions, opposition members would raise issues, usually in the form of a grievance or a criticism of a certain government action or non-action. While the issue was debated, no amendment was moved declaring non-confidence in the government. As made clear by Diefenbaker with regard to his intent, “Before I sit down, let me repeat that the fact we have not moved an amendment does not mean we have changed our attitude in any way. It simply means we are trying to

bring about the effectiveness of which the prime minister spoke” (*Debates*, September 21, 1964, p. 8245).

The first supply motion was moved by PC MP Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre) on April 21, 1964, and it dealt with Veterans’ Hospitals. It was defeated 94-123. The PCs and the NDP caucus voted together, as did the Liberals, *Ralliement*, and SC members.

The second was moved by PC MP Walter Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris) on May 4, 1964, and it condemned the government’s failure to develop Canadian water resources. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe) from Caouette’s group moved a sub-amendment to the Conservative amendment, which essentially deleted the wording of the latter and urged the government to implement the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (ARDA). The *Ralliement* sub-amendment was defeated 12-210. On the main amendment, the PCs stood alone on division and their amendment was also defeated 78-141.

The third supply motion, condemning the government’s neglect of eastern agriculture and calling for immediate action, was moved by PC MP Alvin Hamilton (Qu’Appelle) on May 26, 1964. While the PCs were able to secure the support of 12 New Democrats and 11 *Ralliement* members, the amendment was defeated 112-

130. Once again, eight Socreds and two lone New Democrats (Howard and Winch) voted with the Liberals.

Third Session, 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
April 5, 1965 to September 7, 1965

The third session of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament sat for 117 days. During this period, the government introduced one SFT, one budget, and a total of 23 bills in the House. The main opposition party, the PC party, put forward 3 supply motions.

*Speech from the Throne*

Pearson (1)'s third SFT was read on April 5, 1965. Its content was summarized by Saywell (1966) in the following terms:

After the usual platitudes about international affairs, the speech from the throne declared that the government would continue to promote national unity by nationalizing constitutional amendment, and by adopting "O Canada" as the national anthem and "God Save the Queen" as the royal anthem. Also included were a host of individual measures: reform of House procedure; a royal commission to study adjudicative and regulatory bodies and study the desirability of an ombudsman; a decision on capital punishment; limitation of election expenses; transportation legislation; establishment of a science council; a revision of immigration policy and procedures; bills to protect Canadian publications, amend the broadcasting legislation, and help the development of a feature film industry; and the compulsory retirement of senators. But for the bulk of the speech was devoted to the Canadian version of the "War on Poverty". Among measures cited were an area development programme, re-employment assistance for displaced workers, formation of a company of young Canadians, a fund for rural development and extension of ARDA, a Canada assistance plan to help the needy, special assistance to the family farm and to agriculture generally, an expanded national fisheries

programme, discussion of a comprehensive medicare scheme, and a Canada development corporation “to assist in financing major new industrial developments and in increasing Canadian ownership of business corporations.” (pp. 16-17)

As customary, the PC Party put forward an amendment declaring non-confidence in the government. It read:

We respectfully regret that Your Excellency’s advisers, because of confusion and indecision in dealing with national problems, and the careless indifference and neglect of the Prime Minister in refusing to take action to eradicate wrongdoing in high and low places under federal responsibility and to restore public confidence in the honesty and integrity of government, no longer enjoy the confidence of this house and of the Canadian people. (*Debates*, April 6, 1965, p. 31)

This motion was defeated by a slim margin of 93 to 106. Eleven *Ralliement* members, 10 New Democrats, five SC members, one Independent SC member joined 66 PCs nearly defeating the government. Interestingly, the two new Independent members (Balcer and Paul), who formerly sat in the PC caucus, voted with 104 Liberals.<sup>72</sup>

The NDP moved a sub-amendment to the PC amendment, which read:

That the amendment be amended by inserting therein, immediately after the words ‘because of confusion and indecision in dealing with national problems,’ the following words: ‘including their failure to present specific

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<sup>72</sup> Rémi Paul (Berthier-Maskinongé-Delanaudière) quit the PC caucus to sit as an Independent on February 18, 1965. Léon Balcer (Trois-Rivières) quit the PC caucus to sit as an Independent on April 7, 1965.

proposals for a universal and comprehensive medicare program for all the people of Canada. (*Debates*, April 6, 1965, p. 49)

This sub-amendment was also defeated by a wider margin of 84 to 129. Seventy PCs joined 14 NDP members in support of this motion, while the *Ralliement* members, the SC caucus and Independents voted with the Liberals.

It should be noted that Independent SC MP Marcoux also moved a sub-amendment to the PC amendment. It was defeated on division. However, there was no standing vote because less than five members rose.

Finally, *Ralliement* MP Plourde (Quebec West) also moved an amendment, which read:

We regret that Your Excellency's advisers have failed to propose a measure to exempt from income tax any Canadian married or with dependents who earns less than \$5,000 a year and any single Canadian who earns less than \$2,500 a year, and therefore no longer enjoy the confidence of the house and the Canadian people. (*Debates*, April 12, 1965, p. 249)

This amendment was also defeated: 32 to 126. The *Ralliement* received the support of only 20 PCs and one SC member, whereas 32 PCs, 12 New Democrats, 3 Socreds voted with 78 Liberals to defeat the amendment.

### *Gordon's third budget – April 26, 1965*

The third and final Liberal budget of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament was described as “dull as the afternoon debate” (Saywell, 1966, p. 20). According to its author, Finance Minister Gordon, it included, amongst others, the following proposals:

(a) The creation of the Canada Development Corporation. (b) Legislation to deal with the magazine problem and preserving Canadian ownership and control of Canadian newspapers. (c) A ten per cent reduction of the basic tax payable under the personal income tax law, subject to a maximum reduction of \$600. This represented a tax cut of \$265 million a year, the largest tax reduction in twelve years. (p. 205)

The PC amendment to the budget speech was moved by the finance critic and it read:

This House regrets that the Government has failed to meet the most pressing economic problems of the country by refusing to abolish the sales tax on production machinery, which tax continues to penalize the manufacturing industry and business, thereby undermining Canada's competitive position in markets at home and abroad; and by not giving adequate relief from taxation for the lower income groups and increased assistance to old age pensioners in the face of the steadily rising cost of living. (*Debates*, April 28, 1965, p. 701)

This motion was narrowly defeated by a margin of 100 to 111. Eleven New Democrats, nine *Ralliement* members joined 80 PCs. Once again, the Socreds (six + one Independent) voted with the government, as did two Independent members (Balcer and Paul).

In response, the NDP introduced a sub-amendment to the PC amendment, which read:

That the amendment be amended by deleting [therefrom] all the words after the words "lower income groups" and by inserting instead thereof the following words: 'by exempting from income tax all single persons with incomes up to \$1,500 a year and all married persons with incomes up to \$3,000 a year, and by failing to raise the old age security pension to \$100 a month'. (*Debates*, April 28, 1965, p. 707)

This sub-amendment was also defeated 90 to 106: 63 PCs, 10 *Ralliement* members, and two Independent members joined 15 NDP members while four Socreds voted with the Liberals.

### *Legislative Program and Supply Motions*

During the third session, the government introduced 23 bills and managed to pass 19 of them. These legislative accomplishments did not equal the accomplishments of the previous two sessions. According to Newman (1968), the House was "still exhausted by the emotional splurge of the flag debate, stumbled listlessly through a few procedural reforms, then adjourned on the last day of June, its schedule of legislative priorities virtually untouched" (p. 337).

Also, this session saw the introduction of only one supply motion dealing with the "failure to provide protection under Canada-U.S. Automobile Agreement". It was moved by the NDP on May 11, 1965 and was defeated 95 to 110. The NDP

managed to get the support of the PC caucus and 11 *Ralliement* members. This was not enough as five SC members voted with the Liberal caucus.

### Overall summary and assessment of the three sessions

In sum, during 418 sitting days, Pearson (1) managed to introduce 106 bills and pass 93 of them. Moreover, Pearson (1) managed to survive at least 30 tests of confidence, and, at times, under difficult circumstances. As pointed out by Granatstein and Hillmer (1999): “His five years as prime minister were marred by government disorganization, Cabinet leaks, accusations of scandal, and the worst political partisanship Canadians had seen in half a century” (p. 137). By all accounts, the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament was “a stormy Parliament of three sessions” (Gordon, 1977, p. 217). Samuels (2002) reminds us that “governing under such circumstances [minority government] is never easy, and Pearson’s party endured scandals, bungled budgets and the contentious flag debate” (p. 268). Yet, despite all this, there is general consensus amongst historians that this government’s legislative accomplishments are impressive (English, 1990, pp. 306-307; Granatstein & Hillmer, 1999, p. 146; Samuels, 2002, p. 268). How can we account for this? The answer to this question is multi-layered and deserves to be examined further.

In the first section of this chapter, we determined that Pearson (1)’s bargaining power was strong due to a confluence of factors: following the electoral defeat of

1963 the PCs were in a weakened position; the internecine war that was waged within the social credit movement that eventually led to a major schism within the party; the smaller parties' unwillingness to fight another election anytime soon and their genuine willingness to work with the Liberals on common priorities; and, as a result of all this, the availability for the ruling Liberals of potential allies dispersed across many different parties.

In this second section on agenda control, we saw how the government's strong bargaining power played itself out in concrete terms during key debates and votes. Throughout the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, the governing Liberals could count on the explicit support of certain parties, most notably the SC Party, the NDP, and, to a lesser degree, the *Ralliement* caucus. The Liberals could also count on the implicit support of parties via timely abstentions or "no-shows" during crucial votes. As discussed earlier, Pearson had little trouble winning the support of Thompson due to the mutual respect and admiration they shared for one another. Also, he was able to secure Douglas's support because of their ideological closeness, or more clearly, the common goals they shared. As pointed out by MacKay (2005), "On the political level, that made John Diefenbaker the 'odd man out'" (p. 201-202).

More specifically, in this section we examined the House business of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, including the SFT, budget, legislative program, and supply motions of each session in order to assess Pearson (1)'s overall control of the agenda. A

government's ability to control the timing and content of the issues put before the House is a key determinant of its overall ability to survive tests of confidence and pass its legislative program. Pearson (1)'s long durability and high legislative productivity leads us to conclude that it also enjoyed high agenda control.

To better illustrate these points, we have compiled in Appendix G the key votes (i.e., SFT, budget, supply motions) during the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament. The votes are presented in chronological order. Each break in the table signals the beginning of a new session.

In total, there were 30 votes related to SFTs, budgets, and opposition supply motions. However, as already mentioned two votes on a supply motion criticizing the government for its lack of consultations with provinces in November 1963 were not deemed by the government as being confidence matters. In fact, on these two votes (amendment and sub-amendment), the government voted with the opposition parties to support the motions, which were both agreed to. Also, on April 9, 1965, a sub-amendment on the SFT moved by Independent SC MP Marcoux, was lost on division without a standing recorded vote. Therefore, during the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, there were at least 27 standing recorded votes of confidence, all of which were defeated.

In the following table, we have compiled some interesting facts on the voting patterns of the different parties on these key votes.<sup>73</sup>

**Table 5.1 Interesting Facts on Key Votes – Pearson (1)**

| FACT                                                                                                                 | NUMBER OF<br>VOTES<br>(OUT OF 27) | PERCENTAGE<br>(%) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Opposition motions (including amendments and sub-amendments) introduced by:                                          |                                   |                   |
| PC                                                                                                                   | 15                                | 55                |
| NDP                                                                                                                  | 7                                 | 26                |
| <i>Ralliement</i>                                                                                                    | 4                                 | 15                |
| SC                                                                                                                   | 1                                 | 4                 |
| Votes where Liberals were completely isolated                                                                        | 0                                 | 0                 |
| Votes where PCs were completely isolated                                                                             | 7                                 | 26                |
| Votes where Liberals received the support of only one caucus                                                         | 4 <sup>74</sup>                   | 15                |
| <b>Votes where Liberals received the support of two or more caucuses or individual members of different caucuses</b> | <b>23</b>                         | <b>85</b>         |
| <b>Votes where the majority of the SC caucus voted with Liberals</b>                                                 | <b>22</b>                         | <b>81</b>         |
| Votes where the majority of the <i>Ralliement</i> caucus voted with Liberals                                         | 9                                 | 39                |
| Votes where the majority of the members of the NDP caucus voted with Liberals                                        | 8                                 | 30                |

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that the most cohesive caucus was the PC caucus followed by the *Ralliement* caucus.

<sup>74</sup> On three of the four occasions, the Liberals received the support of the SC caucus. On the fourth, two independents, previously PC caucus members, voted with the government.

|                                                                                     |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|
| Votes where at least one NDP member broke ranks with his caucus to support Liberals | 11 | 41 |
| Votes where the majority of the PC caucus voted with Liberals                       | 6  | 22 |

While the government was facing potential defeat on virtually every confidence vote, it won most votes handily. However, on a few occasions, the vote count was very close. In the following table we have compiled the five closest votes, where the government won by 15 votes or less. A third of these votes occurred in the final months of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

**Table 5.2 Closest Votes - Pearson (1)**

| <b>Date</b>       | <b>Motion / Sponsor</b> | <b>Vote Count</b> | <b>Vote Spread</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| February 25, 1964 | PC SFT amdt.            | 120 - 128         | 8                  |
| May 21, 1963      | NDP SFT sub-amdt.       | 113 - 124         | 11                 |
| May 3, 1965       | PC Budget amdt.         | 100 - 111         | 11                 |
| April 9, 1965     | PC SFT amdt.            | 93 - 106          | 13                 |
| May 11, 1965      | NDP Supply Motion       | 110 - 95          | 15                 |

Behind these numbers and percentages are the majority building efforts made by Pearson and his government to ensure durability and high legislative output. It should be reminded that the majority building strategies adopted by minority

governments are a function of the relative strength of their bargaining power and agenda control. In this vein, there are two factors that need to be singled-out: 1- the Pearson government's attitude and approach to governing in a minority situation and 2- its attention to the business of the House, including the appropriate tactics to use to ensure survival and safe passage of its legislative agenda.

With regard to the first point, Pearson's attitude vis-à-vis minority government was made evident by his reaction to the 1963 budget fiasco. Instead of holding strong to his original position as laid out in the budget, Pearson readjusted and withdrew the contentious proposals and even re-introduced a revised budget to ensure it was agreeable to all opposition parties. Looking back on this issue and others like it during his time in office, Pearson wrote in his memoirs:

There were special problems of which I soon became aware, problems special to a minority government. We intended at first just to carry on and to bring in the necessary legislation as though the party had a majority of twenty-five or thirty. That is what we said we would do; but we found the reality not so simple. Almost instinctively and unconsciously a minority government looks for legislation likely to get a least some support from the other parties because, naturally if that support is not given, defeat and an election will result. (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 94)

This approach was also singled out by Pearson's top policy advisor, Tom Kent (2009), who made the following comment relating to Pearson's legislative successes: "The process in federal politics was one not of trade-offs but of finding common ground" (pp. 26-27).

Similarly, author Lloyd Mackay (2005) declared:

Pearson's modus operandi, as a career diplomat, was to work with both the NDP on the left and the Social Credit on the right to bring forward legislation that would, to some degree, satisfy both. That left the Diefenbaker Conservatives to function as the official opposition, while the Liberals, in effect, governed with the tacit permission of smaller parties at each end of the political spectrum. (p. 199)

However, as mentioned earlier, Pearson's propensity to find common ground did not always serve him well. Many saw this personality trait in a negative light. For example, Samuels (2002) has argued: "His conciliatory approach which had proved so successful in diplomacy did not always translate to politics. Pearson's efforts to accommodate all views were often interpreted as poor leadership and a lack of direction" (p. 268).

As for our second point, the Pearson government paid much attention to the business of the House and the appropriate tactics to use to ensure safe passage of its legislative agenda. In his memoirs, Pearson made the following two revealing statements: "I gave much thought, naturally, to the tactics we should adopt" (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 97) and "A minority status made it important to arrange our priorities and House tactics with equal care" (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 97).

Despite a shaky start with regard to the timing of its first budget, the Pearson government made good use of the parliamentary calendar. Also, as just noted, it

sought out consensus and common ground before introducing its government bills. This approach served the Liberals well in the House as the smaller opposition parties, who feared another election, were more inclined to work with them on common legislative priorities and allow them to continue to govern by not actively seeking to defeat them during crucial confidence votes.

### **III      Dissolution: How Pearson (1) Ended**

As made evident by our analysis in the previous two sections, Pearson (1) enjoyed strong bargaining power and high agenda control. Despite its minority situation, this government was managing well to survive and pass its bills. Moreover, there was nothing on the horizon to indicate that this situation was about to change. By the fall of 1965, after being in office for almost two and a half years, Pearson (1) was well-positioned to potentially live out its full term. However, on September 7, 1965, Pearson sought and was granted by Governor General Vanier the dissolution of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament.<sup>75</sup> Canada's fifth election in barely over eight years would be held on November 8, 1965 (English, 1990, p. 304).

The government's motives in calling the election were transparent: the need for a majority government. In his memoirs, Pearson is very candid in explaining his decision to hold a general election in 1965. He states: "Our only reason to

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<sup>75</sup> See D. Smith, 1973: Chapter 11: An Election of Convenience, pp. 242-267.

contemplate a dissolution at that time was to secure a majority in the Commons, a 'vote of confidence' from the electorate to remove from our backs the dread incubus of never knowing when we would be thrown out" (Munro & Inglis, 1975: 197). Also, he states:

...it was not an election required because we had been defeated in the House or because our statutory five-year period in office had expired or was to expire soon. We had called the election for political reasons, and this put a greater feeling of responsibility on my shoulders. (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 207)

Strains in Parliament began to show in 1964, a year plagued by scandal (Gwyn, 1965). As noted by D. Smith (1963),

The year 1964 ended without solace for the harassed members of the government. The Parliamentary situation seemed almost intolerable, and ministers wondered how long they could carry on without another general election. No one looked forward to meeting the House after the Christmas recess. (p. 210)

D. Smith (1973) also reveals that it was in that same year that the timing of the next election became a topic of discussion amongst Pearson's closest advisors (pp. 202-203).<sup>76</sup> As argued by English (1990), "[Pearson] disliked minority government, which never allowed one to stand 'at ease'" (p. 304). If Pearson and his advisors were partial to a majority government, calling an election was the only means of achieving that goal. The following year, in the spring of 1965, Pearson wrote a memorandum on party strategy in response to a memorandum he received from Walter Gordon strongly recommending an election that year (English, 1990, p.

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<sup>76</sup> See also Gordon Papers, Memorandum to Mr. Pearson, July 16, 1964.

304)<sup>77</sup>. In Pearson's memorandum, dated April 13, 1965, he assesses the options his government faced without taking a firm position himself on the issue. It was not until September 3, 1965, during a meeting at Harrington Lake with his closest political advisers that Pearson made the decision to dissolve Parliament and set the date for the next general election (Munro & Inglis, 1975, pp. 203-204). Interestingly, as pointed out by Russell (2008), "With two and a half years elapsed since the last election, no question was raised about the constitutionality of calling for an election without a defeat in the House" (p. 32).

In the end, the 1965 general election left the parliamentary balance virtually unchanged (Kent, 2009, p. 30). Russell (2008) offers the following summary of the election results:

The 1965 election goes down in history as the election that marked the least change in the electorate's preferences. The Liberals did not win the parliamentary majority they so dearly coveted, nor did they slay John Diefenbaker. The Liberals and Conservatives each gained two seats. The Liberals' popular vote actually dropped a point and a half, while the Conservatives' went up by four and a half. The NDP picked up four more seats with an increase of just under 5% in its popular vote. The main losers were the Socreds, (...) Robert Thompson's Alberta rump taking five seats and Caouette's *Créditistes* nine. (p. 32)

These results put into question the necessity of an early election call. In his memoirs, an exasperated Pearson candidly declared: "We had gone through it all for nothing!" (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 207)

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<sup>77</sup> See L.B. Pearson, Memorandum, April 13, 1965, MG26 N5, v. 45 (NAC) and Munro and Inglis, 1975, pp. 198-201.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we applied our theoretical framework to Pearson's first minority government (1963-1965). Despite not winning a majority of the seats on election night and thus having to govern in a minority situation, Pearson found himself in a relatively strong position: he faced a divided opposition; the smaller parties did not want to fight another election; most opposition parties were genuinely willing to work with his government to advance common priorities; and, he had ideological partners to work with. The combination of these factors and others made it such that Pearson (1) enjoyed strong bargaining power. Also, in the early stages of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, by making a few concessions at a relatively low cost to them, the Liberals managed to resolve the dispute over the *Ralliement's* recognition in the House without losing the good will of either Thompson or Caouette. This considerably reduced the risk of defeat of the government in a close vote. Moreover, the Liberals showed themselves quite adept at navigating government bills and defeating non-confidence motions in the House. Throughout the life of the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament, in sometimes difficult circumstances, the government controlled the legislative calendar and agenda. In sum, Pearson (1) confirms our hypothesis which postulates that minority governments that enjoy strong bargaining power and high agenda control are more apt to fulfill their viability and effectiveness requirements.

What lessons can be drawn from this minority experience? First, it highlights the important role of intra-party cohesion. While the SC schism was not necessarily a welcome outcome within the social credit movement, it definitely played to the governing Liberals' advantage. Second, creating legislative alliances is much easier when the governing party has ideological allies. Much has already been written about the closeness in terms of policy space between Pearson's Liberals and the NDP. This rapprochement made it easier for the two parties to work together on common priorities. Also, Pearson's close working relationship with Thompson ensured consistent SC support. This occurred despite the fact that these two men and their parties did not necessarily share the same ideological orientation. Third, there are huge benefits to having more than one party to turn to for support. As we have already mentioned, the Liberals had many parties to choose from for support, especially following the SC split. Fourth, Pearson (1) highlights the crucial role played by the Liberal House leader. Jack Pickersgill, or "Jack-the-Nimble" as he was known (McCall-Newman, 1982, p. 14), was by many accounts "an excellent House leader in 1963" (English, 1990, p. 313). Author and journalist Peter C. Newman (1968) has written about "his strong personality, encyclopaedic knowledge of Ottawa and its ways, his mastery of Commons rules and intense loyalty to Lester Pearson" (p. 231) and credits "his continuous negotiations with the Social Crediters" for creating a parliamentary majority for the Liberals (p. 238). Finally, Pearson (1) illustrates the desire to secure a majority is omnipresent and powerful. Despite managing to pass its legislative proposals with no real or imminent threat of defeat,

the Liberals dissolved Parliament hoping to turn their minority into a majority. However, in the end, this goal eluded them.

## CHAPTER 6<sup>78</sup>

### CLARK

#### 1979- 1980

Canada's 31<sup>st</sup> general election was held on May 22, 1979. On this day, the PC Party led by Charles Joseph (Joe) Clark managed to elect more members to the House than any other party. This victory came on the heels of over 16 years of uninterrupted rule (over five under Pearson's leadership and 11 under Trudeau's). The seat breakdown of that election was as follows:

**Figure 6.1    Seat count of the 31<sup>st</sup> General Election (May 22, 1979)**

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Progressive Conservative Party        | 136 |
| Liberal Party of Canada               | 114 |
| New Democratic Party                  | 26  |
| Social Credit Party (all from Quebec) | 6   |
| Total                                 | 282 |

Number of seats required for majority = 142

Despite the facts that the PCs did not manage to secure a majority of the seats and more Canadians voted Liberal than PC, there was never any doubt about Clark's mandate to govern.<sup>79</sup> On June 4, 1979, one day before his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, Joe Clark was sworn in as prime minister, making him the youngest person in Canada ever to

<sup>78</sup> The *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs, 1979* (edited by R.B. Byers, 1981) was an invaluable source of information in preparing and writing this chapter. The chapter titled "Parliament and Politics" was written by Frederick J. Fletcher and Donald C. Wallace.

<sup>79</sup> The percentage of the popular vote each party received was as follows: PC 35%; LIB 40%; NDP 17%; SC 4%; other 1% .

assume that Office. It was Canada's 9<sup>th</sup> minority government since Confederation and Canada's 6<sup>th</sup> minority Parliament in 22 years.<sup>80</sup>

This government represents our third type of minority government: short duration / low output. Compared to the other eight minority governments since 1957, the Clark government ranks low on duration (8<sup>th</sup> overall with only 49 sitting days) and ranks very poorly on legislative output (last again with a 24.1% passing rate of government bills). This government is the polar opposite of the Pearson government we studied in the previous chapter. Whereas Pearson (1) managed to pass the vast majority of its bills and survive confidence tests, Clark's minority government is the shortest elected government in Canadian history and has been described as one of the least successful (Donaldson, 1994, p.274).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the governing party's bargaining power post-election; the second section assesses the government's control of the agenda; and, the third section analyzes how this government was defeated.

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<sup>80</sup> See Appendix I for a chronology of the main events of the life of this government.

## I      **Bargaining Power**

In order to get a sense of the PCs' bargaining power post-election, this section focuses primarily on the relationships between the various parties as well as their internal dynamics. The use (or non use) of majority building strategies are often a function of the make-up of the House, the availability of potential partners, and the possibility of cooperation between the various parties.

### *Make-up of the House of Commons*

As noted, the PCs elected 136 members on election night. The House in 1979 had 282 seats. Therefore, 142 was the magic number required for a majority. The governing party was six seats short of its majority. Ideologically speaking, the party closest to the PCs was the SC Party. The combined total of their seats equaled 142 (136 + 6). This simple calculation would seem to suggest that, initially, at least, the 6 SC members (*Créditistes*) from Quebec held the balance of power. However, Clark signaled his intention of establishing a strong government and refused to negotiate with *Créditiste* leader Fabien Roy to assure his support. The day after the election Clark said: "I am proceeding on the assumption that the Progressive Conservative Party has won a mandate to govern. I intend to carry out that mandate" (as cited in Russell, 2008, p. 36).

There were a series of events that occurred in the summer and fall of 1979 that had an impact on the distribution of seats in the House. First, former Liberal cabinet minister Don Jamieson (Burin-St. George's) resigned in June to enter provincial politics in his native Newfoundland and Labrador. Second, the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert) passed away on August 16, 1979. The PCs lost the two by-elections held on November 19, 1979, to fill these two vacancies: one to the Liberals (Burin-St. George's) and one to the NDP (Prince Albert). Third, just before Parliament opened, on September 23, Richard Janelle, *Créditiste* MP for Lotbinière, left his party to join the PC caucus. Although the PCs lost both by-elections, according to Simpson (1980), "Clark took heart from Janelle's defection, believing that other *Créditiste* M.P.s would follow if the Conservatives demonstrated that the *Créditiste* Party was powerless in Ottawa" (p. 30). Finally, Clark reappointed the Liberal Speaker of the previous Parliament, the James Jerome (Sudbury). This nomination set a historical precedent: it was the first time a member of the opposition had been selected for that office by the governing party.

These events realigned the party standings in the House as follows<sup>81</sup>:

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Progressive Conservative Party        | 136 |
| Liberal Party of Canada               | 113 |
| New Democratic Party                  | 27  |
| Social Credit Party (all from Quebec) | 5   |

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<sup>81</sup> The total equals 281 as we did not take into account the (Liberal) Speaker who can only vote in case of a tie.

Once again, it would appear the survival of the PC government in Parliament depended on its ability to secure the support of the five SC members. The combined PC and SC votes added up to 141 versus the 140 combined votes of the Liberals and the NDP (113 + 27). However, in theory, at least, the government could pass its program with the help of any one of the three opposition parties (e.g., PC + LIB = 249; PC + NDP = 163; PC + SC = 141). While this was mathematically accurate, was it realistic? Given the parties' position on the left-right political spectrum, their past experiences of political cooperation, their respective policy views and the intra-party dynamics of each party, what was the likelihood of the PCs gaining parliamentary support from any of the opposition parties? Let us try to provide some answers to this question.<sup>82</sup>

With regard to the first factor, the parties' position on the left-right political spectrum, author Ronald G. Landes (1981) in his analysis of the 1980 general election, summarized it this way:

the New Democratic Party, as a social-democratic party, would appear on the left; the Liberals would appear in the centre, usually on the left-of-centre but flexible enough to move to the centre-right if political conditions required it; the Progressive Conservatives as a centre-right party; and Social Credit on the right of the political spectrum." (p. 99)

This analysis was consistent with the prevailing conventional thinking of the ideological positioning of the various parties at that time.

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<sup>82</sup> In writing this section, we borrowed heavily from the analysis provided in Landes (1981).

With Landes' (1981) analysis in mind, it may be more helpful to examine our factors (i.e., ideological positioning, past experiences of political cooperation between the parties, policy views and intra-party dynamics of each party) by looking at each party individually as the factors play out differently for each party.

### *The Progressive Conservative Party*

With regard to Joe Clark and his party, there are four relevant and important issues to consider. First, in 1976, Joe Clark, a relatively unknown MP from Alberta, unexpectedly won the leadership of the PC Party as the compromise candidate. The day after his election as leader, the *Toronto Star* announced the results of the leadership convention with a headline that read "Joe Who?". From this, we retain two points. First, as highlighted by Martin, Gregg, and Perlin (1983), "[Clark] was handicapped by the fact that he had no broad base of support either within or outside the party" (p. xiii). Therefore, his problem was circular:

He needed a broad personal following among the electorate to command the support of potential dissidents within the party, but he needed to demonstrate his ability to master the party if he were to be successful in creating an image that would command a personal following among the electorate. (Martin et al., 1983, pp. xiv-xv)

Second, no national party leader had ever come to office with so little known about him. "He had no record, no public persona from which to be judged" (Martin et al., 1983, p. xiii). According to pollster Allan Gregg: "It may not be an exaggeration to suggest that a national leader has rarely, if ever assumed office with lower

expectations concerning his ability to govern” (Internal briefing memo written by Tory pollster Allan Gregg, as cited in Plamondon, 2009, p. 298).

The second issue to consider is despite Clark’s efforts to establish himself as a strong and effective leader, the image as projected through the media was anything but one of strength and competence. In fact, as early as 1978, his image as a weak leader was firmly established and quickly became a liability (Martin et al., 1983, pp. xvi-xvii). According to Martin et al. (1983), “The Conservatives won not because of Joe Clark’s image, but in spite of it. They won because outside Quebec a majority of voters had had enough of the Trudeau Liberals” (p. xvii).

The third issue is that prior to forming the government in 1979 the PCs had been in opposition for 16 consecutive years and had been out of power for about 38 of the previous 44 years. No longer in opposition, the party and its leader had a steep learning curve to contend with when it came to the art of governing. According to Simpson (1980), all the time spent in opposition resulted in the development of “an Opposition-party mentality – an approach to problems borne of reaction to the exercise of power rather than the wielding of it” (Simpson, 1980, p. xi).

The fourth and final issue has to do with the timing of the next election. When the PCs won the 1979 election there was no general expectation amongst political

observers of an early election. According to the *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs, 1979 (Annual Review)*, “The consensus was that the government would certainly not last a full term, though it could reasonably be expected to govern at least through most of 1980” (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 46). This sentiment was echoed later in the early fall of 1979: “it does not appear that the government will soon be defeated on a vote of confidence. It is more likely that at a propitious time, perhaps next fall or during the spring of 1981, the government itself will call an election” (Waller, 1979, p. 12). However, as pointed out by authors Fletcher and Wallace (1981), “visions of Diefenbaker’s successes in 1957 and 1958 made [Clark] disinclined to avoid one [also]” (p. 46). Like his predecessor, Clark was prepared and eager to ride the wave and turn his minority government into a majority government.

To sum up, Clark was a relatively unknown newcomer who did not necessarily enjoy broad support, both within his party and the electorate, and was eager to present himself as a strong and capable leader to compensate for his relatively young age and inexperience. These issues of experience (and lack thereof), support, image, and quest for a majority are recurring themes throughout this chapter.

### *The New Democratic Party*

Given that the PC Party under Clark’s leadership was seen as a centre-right party, the party the government could least expect support from was the left leaning social-

democratic party, the NDP. The PCs had run on a “platform of reduced state intervention and selling off of crown corporations” (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 60). For its part, the NDP and its new leader, Ed Broadbent, put forward a platform promising “Canadians more control of the economy through a mixture of tax changes, planning agreements with major companies, selective state intervention, and an enlarged role for Petro-Canada in oil development” (Jeffrey Simpson, *Globe and Mail*, November 26, 1979 as cited in Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 60). The policy distance between these two parties was therefore significant.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, the painful lessons of the NDP’s position in relation to the minority Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau between 1972 and 1974 were still fresh. The NDP did not want to be seen propping up another minority government for the fear of being squeezed between the two major parties in any new election, as had been the case in 1974.

As for Broadbent’s leadership and his control of the party, it was solid. The general election of 1979 was his first as leader and it has been judged as a success. He managed to win 10 more seats than the previous election and increased his party’s popular vote from 15.4% in 1974 to 17.9 in 1979. At the party’s national convention in late November, Broadbent’s leadership was re-affirmed by the more than 1,400

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<sup>83</sup> A more in-depth analysis of the government and opposition parties’ policy positions will be provided later in this chapter.

delegates and, in addition, his policy positions carried the day (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, pp. 59-60).

Given all this, the possibility of support from the NDP seemed unlikely. In fact, “while the Liberals were pre-occupied with internal problems, the NDP filled the opposition role over the summer and during the early weeks of the session” (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981: pp. 58-59). This therefore strengthened its position of opposing the government. Given all this, the most the government could hope for would be timely abstentions by some members of the NDP on important votes.

### *The Liberal Party of Canada*

As for the Liberals, the possibility of supporting the PCs seemed unlikely as well. Despite their electoral defeat, the Liberals were still the leading opposition party, thus forming the official opposition, and wanted to project an image of a “government-in-waiting”. As such, in order to maintain their credibility, they could ill afford to be seen as giving the PCs a blank cheque. At best, the possibility of Liberal support for the PC government would likely be indirect rather than openly declared. However, the Liberals had first to resolve their leadership issue.

By 1979, Trudeau had been party leader and prime minister for over a decade. He had won a majority in 1968; reduced to a minority in 1972; and, regained majority

status in 1974. Waiting for the polls to turn in his favour, he had postponed calling an election well into the 5<sup>th</sup> year of his mandate. When the 1979 general election was finally called, the LPC looked like a tired administration (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 60) and dissatisfaction in the country with Trudeau was running deep.

Despite the fact that more Canadians voted Liberal (40%) than PC (35%) in the 1979 election, Trudeau was seen as likely to leave the leadership of the LPC (Landes, 1981, p. 100). As reported in the 1979 *Annual Review* “the questioning of Pierre Trudeau's leadership began almost before the final ballots were counted....attention rarely strayed long from the future of Mr. Trudeau and the identification of possible successors” (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 52). In June (1979), shortly after the election, the Liberal caucus unanimously endorsed Trudeau's leadership. However, there was an important faction within caucus, mostly made up of members from English-speaking Canada who had survived the 1979 defeat and who felt it was time for a new leader. They were emboldened in their thinking by the fact that there was no shortage of potential strong successors, such as Donald Macdonald and John Turner. In July of the same year, Trudeau pledged to stay on and lead the party into the next election (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 53). Despite these public pronouncements, Trudeau kept a very low profile all summer. By the fall, “it was widely reported that the Liberal party was prepared to let Mr. Trudeau choose his time to step down and expected him to go quietly” (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 56).

On the policy front, there existed some important differences between the PCs and Liberals. There was a well publicized meeting between Clark and Trudeau in early June 1979. While this meeting was described as “cordial”, differences in policy were aired (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 47). The two main policy disagreements were the role of Petro-Canada and the Tory pledge to move the Canadian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

As for the timing of the next election, given the state of the LPC, it seemed logical to conclude that the Liberals were not keen on defeating the government and forcing an election, at least not until the question of their leadership was resolved. As argued by Landes (1981), “it was expected that the Liberals would allow the Government to survive through Liberal absenteeism in the House” (p. 100).

### *Les Cr ditistes*

The party that seemed to present the PCs’ best hope for consistent support was the smallest party in the House, the SC Party. Considered by many observers as “the Tories’ political cousins” (Plamondon, 2009, p. 302), the five *Cr ditiste* votes could ensure the government’s survival and ability to govern.

The SC Party was a conservative-populist party that promoted ideologically-based social credit theories of monetary reform. As observed by Landes (1981),

Since it burst onto the federal political scene in the 1962, Social Credit had usually lost ground in terms of seats in each ensuing election, had not elected a Member of Parliament outside of Quebec since 1965, faced leadership problems and internal dissent after the death of its former leader R  al Caouette, and had declined in the public opinion polls to such an extent that a new election might wipe out its few remaining seats in Quebec. (p. 99-100)

It should also be noted that during election campaigns, SC candidates were attacked on two fronts: by the Liberals, who were trying to maintain their dominance over the province, and by the PCs, who were hoping to expand their support into new ridings. Given all this, it would be logical to conclude that the last thing that the small band of SC members would want is another general election. Landes (1981) summed it up best when he wrote: "Thus, fear of attack and the likely results of a new election appeared to make SC amenable to supporting the Clark Government" (p.100). It is also important to note that in past minority situations (1962, 1963-65, 1965-68, 1972-74), the SC members tended to support the government of the day on crucial votes, as was clearly demonstrated in our previous chapter on Pearson's first minority government from 1963 to 1965.

Given all this, did Clark make any efforts to secure the support of the SC Party? To answer that question, a good starting point is the SC's quest for official party status.

The issue of party status was raised and addressed in our previous chapter when we discussed the SC split in 1963. It is important to recap those events and the events that came after (between 1964 and 1979) in order to better understand the

situation in 1979. As we saw, in 1963, the *Parliament of Canada Act* (*Act*) set a threshold of 12 members for parties to be duly recognized and granted special allowances. Shortly thereafter, the 12-member threshold was loosely applied when the *Ralliement Cr ditiste* split from the SC Party, which was left with only 11 members (Blaikie, 1994, p. 30). At that time, the *Act* was interpreted to grant certain financial benefits to parties with more than 12 members but not take away any other rights of parties that had fewer than 12 members.<sup>84</sup> Following this episode, subsequent Speakers allowed for a broad interpretation of the *Act* during routine proceedings in the House, often conferring onto smaller parties (with less than 12 members) the same parliamentary privileges as the bigger parties. Also, subsequent Parliaments tended to protect the rights of small parties, sometimes even ignoring the 12-member threshold on financial matters (Blaikie, 2004, p. 31). A point in case: the SC Party after the 1974 election. Despite the fact that the SC Party had only 11 members, it nonetheless received financial allowance for research purposes. In short, in 1979, while the *Act* set a 12-member threshold, there were relevant precedents to suggest that this did not constitute a “hard and fast rule” in practice” (Blaikie, 2004, p.30).

On June 8, 1979, shortly after the May 22 general election, SC leader Roy met with Clark to discuss various policy issues and the question of SC’s official party status in the House. Such recognition was regarded as critical by SC members as it would provide them with a research budget, additional salary for their leader, and other rights during House debates (Landes, 1981, p. 100). Not willing to commit himself,

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<sup>84</sup> See previous chapter for more details.

Clark ended the meeting by telling Roy that he would take the question under advisement and get back to him (Roy, 2005, p. 275).

On June 15, on Roy's insistence, Clark finally announced to Roy that his party would not be given official party status and Roy's salary would be that of a regular MP. As for receiving additional funds for research, Clark told Roy that the question was still being considered. Roy reacted with incredulity and frustration at this news.

In his memoirs, he wrote:

*Joe Clark se rend-il compte que, dès la première motion de non-confiance que les libéraux ne manqueront pas de proposer, il aura besoin de notre appui pour se maintenir au pouvoir? C'est pourtant l'évidence même, mais il semble vivre sur une autre planète, les réalités d'ici ne l'atteignent pas...* (Roy, 2005, p. 276)

Then, on September 23, when Roy learned of Janelle's defection to the PCs, he came to the following conclusion, as stated in his memoirs: *"Cet épisode décevant nous permet de découvrir la raison motivant les persécutions que nous inflige Joe Clark: il veut nous affamer pour nous faire succomber."* (Roy, 2005, p. 277)

It was widely reported at the time that PC MP Roch LaSalle<sup>85</sup>, Minister of Supply and Services, and PC Senator Martial Asselin, Minister of State for the Canadian International Development Agency, two of the few Cabinet representatives from Quebec, were pursuing an active campaign of "creating a majority" through *Créditiste* and Liberal defections to the PC ranks. There was even talk of possible appointments to various government jobs (see Landes, 1981, pp. 98-99;

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<sup>85</sup> Roch LaSalle (Joliette) was only one of two elected PCs from Quebec.

Plamondon, 2009, p. 302; Troyer, 1980, pp. 161-162). For example, Janelle was later appointed a Parliamentary Secretary with an additional salary shortly after crossing the floor.

Roy was so dismayed by the PCs' blatant attempts to raid his caucus and lure other members into their fold that he called in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to investigate whether these activities were not illegal (Roy, 2005, p. 277).

However, according to one observer, the PC strategy backfired: "this blatant attempt to create a majority shortly before the opening of Parliament failed to produce any further miraculous [conversions] and certainly did little to bolster the faltering public image of the Clark government" (Landes, 1981, p. 99).

In response to our original question, "Did Clark make any efforts to secure the support of the SC Party", the short answer is no. The reasons why he did not are complex and multi-layered. A review of the literature reveals that there are potentially three plausible reasons that could explain Clark's refusal to even attempt to strike a deal with the *Créditistes* in the early days of his government.

First, Clark was hoping to emulate Diefenbaker who used his 1957 minority government as a springboard to a majority victory in 1958. Second, as reported earlier, Clark wanted to appear strong. According to Martin et al. (1983), "The new government was determined to show the country that it was decisive and could

provide strong leadership” (p. xvii). But, as pointed out by Plamondon (2009), “Whenever he was accused of being weak and inexperienced, Clark proved his critics correct by taking unwise and uncalculated risks simply to demonstrate his manliness” (p. 296). Third, according to Simpson (1980), emboldened by the defection of *Créditiste* MP Janelle, Clark’s strategy was to starve the SC Party to demonstrate its powerlessness in Ottawa (Simpson, 1980, p. 30). Simpson’s thesis is supported by the Clark government’s refusal to confer official party status on the SC Party, which appears to have been a medium-term electoral strategy rather than a short-term legislative strategy.

In summary, our preliminary analysis reveals that due to structural (make-up of the House), historical (past experiences of political cooperation), and ideological (policy-space between parties) reasons, the Clark government’s bargaining power was not very strong. Realistically speaking, the Clark government had only one viable coalition partner: the SC Party. However, for the reasons just outlined, it chose not to work with the *Créditistes*, at least not prior to the opening of Parliament. Instead of building potential alliances, Clark appeared set to govern as a majority. Once the parliamentary session began and faced with confidence tests, would Clark change his attitude and approach vis-à-vis the SC Party? These and other questions related to the Clark government’s ability to control the parliamentary calendar and agenda will be addressed in the next section as the use (or non use) of majority building strategies are also a function of agenda control.

## **II      Agenda Control**

As was the case in our analysis of the two previous chapters, this section is intended to provide an analysis of the government's agenda control by examining issues relating to House Business, such as setting the parliamentary calendar and introducing government bills, and confidence tests related to the SFT, budget, and supply motions.

### *Parliamentary Calendar*

A key lever for a government's control of the agenda is the timing of the opening of Parliament. Following a general election, it is the government's prerogative to decide when to convene Parliament for the first time and present its SFT which sets out its legislative agenda for the forthcoming parliamentary session.<sup>86</sup> In a minority situation, the SFT takes on added importance as it is the first opportunity for the government to test whether or not it has the confidence of the House.

In 1979, Clark decided not to convene Parliament immediately, but to delay its opening. Canada's 31<sup>st</sup> Parliament held its first meeting on October 9, 1979 – almost five months after the May 22 general election. As noted by Russell (2008), it was “the longest hiatus in Canadian parliamentary history” (p. 36). Why did it take so long to convene Parliament and did this strategy work?

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<sup>86</sup> The Constitution requires that there be a sitting of Parliament at least once every twelve months (O'Brien & Bosc, 2009, p. 359).

After 16 years in opposition the PCs wanted to get it right. Immediately after being sworn in as prime minister, Clark was busy with transition issues, such as the organization of offices and personnel. Most importantly, he was busy forming his new cabinet, shuffling the senior ranks of the public service, and preparing for and attending international meetings, such as the Tokyo Economic Summit in late June and the Commonwealth Conference in Zambia in early August.

Yet despite this flurry of activities, the transition from opposition to government was not a smooth one. For example, Clark was roundly criticized for the membership and structure of his cabinet, in particular for its lack of solid francophone representation. As for his ministers, their learning curve was also steep.

...it took ministers some time to grasp the scope of their department's activities and to find consensus among the disparate views within the caucus. Lack of adequate research support [while in opposition] had produced many policies that were inconsistent or unworkable. This led to conflicting statements from ministers, delays in the declaration of policy, and a backing off from some campaign commitments. (Martin et al., 1983, p. xvii)

For example, one campaign commitment that proved to be particularly problematic for Clark and his government was the pledge to move the Canadian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This controversial promise dogged Clark throughout the campaign and continued to do so once in office. It became clear very early in his mandate that Clark had to find an honourable way of extricating

himself from this messy political situation. According to Simpson (1980), “Within a week of taking office, Clark had become convinced that he had to back down, and he needed both to prepare his party and the public for the coming volte-face and to find the least politically damaging way out of his promise” (pp. 155-156). Although this issue was not resolved until late in the fall of 1979 Clark’s handling of the situation apparently damaged his credibility and image. “The Jerusalem promise shackled Clark with a reputation for political opportunism and poor judgement” (Simpson, 1980, p. 157).

On the domestic and policy fronts, in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary session, Clark convened his newly appointed cabinet in Jasper, Alberta in August. It was at this ministerial retreat that “policy directions [were] set, cabinet solidarity welded, legislation presaged and budgets foreshadowed” (Troyer, 1980, p. 23). In short, the PCs developed their game plan for the 31<sup>st</sup> Parliament. While this plan was developed with the best intentions in mind, its focus on long term electoral strategy rather than on short term legislative strategy proved, in time, to be ill-thought out and poorly executed. According to Troyer (1980), the Clark administration “sowed the seeds” of its own demise “the fourth week of August 1979, in its Jasper cabinet meetings” (pp. 22-23). The end result of the PC game plan was far removed from what was envisioned at the outset.

To sum up, while Clark's often stated goal was to show the country that he could provide strong leadership, it would appear, by all accounts, that what he achieved in the early days of his mandate was quite the opposite.<sup>87</sup> "Far from appearing decisive and competent, the government seemed uncertain of its sense of direction and ineffectual. There is now a complete symbiosis of the images of the party and its leader" (Martin et al., 1983, p. xvii). This was the situation in the summer and early fall of 1979 prior to the opening of Parliament. The forthcoming parliamentary session would undoubtedly bring with it new opportunities and challenges as Parliament is the arena where a government's survival and legislative output are played out.

### *Speech from the Throne*

When Parliament finally did open on October 9, 1979, the SFT included commitments to usher in a new era in federal-provincial relations based on consultation and co-operation; introduce freedom of information legislation; amend the Indian Act; extend spouses' allowances; amend legislation respecting veterans; further protect the privacy of individual Canadians; and, introduce measures aimed at reforming the power of Parliament. The government also laid-out a five-part strategy to build on Canada's economic potential: 1- reduce the burden of government on the economy by better controlling expenditures; 2- place greater reliance on individual initiative to generate growth and jobs for Canadians; 3- propose measures to help individual Canadians build a stake in our country; 4-

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<sup>87</sup> For an account of Clark's image challenges, see Simpson, 1980, pp. 72-90 and Troyer, 1980, pp. 38-45.

support programs which build upon the strength of the regions of Canada; and, 5- make Canada self-sufficient in energy by 1990 (*Debates*, October 9, 1979, pp. 5-6).

As is often the case, the opposition parties' reaction to the SFT was mixed. On the one hand, wanting to respect the people's democratic choice as expressed on election day, opposition parties wanted to show some restraint and good will vis-à-vis the government and its plans. On the other hand, also cognizant of their responsibility to keep the government to account, opposition parties wanted to take the opportunity to lay down some markers by criticizing certain aspects of the blueprint put forward by the government. Their overall position can be summarized by the following sentiment: 'We are willing to give you a chance, but be aware that you are on a short leash'. This is especially true in minority situations.

This measured response was articulated by Trudeau in his reply to the SFT. He stated:

There is no doubt that the people of Canada have given the Progressive Conservative Party a mandate to govern Canada and want us to give them the chance to administer our country without being exposed to political interference and chicanery. Not only do we accept and respect the decision of the people, but we will take seriously the responsibility with which we have been entrusted to co-operate constructively in the preparation of Canadian policies. (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 30)

He went on to add:

Mr. Speaker, the government can continue to count on the co-operation of the official opposition for any of its initiatives which can improve the situation of Canada and Canadians. We do not believe in the senseless

ritual which consists in voting against the government on every occasion and every issue. This type of irresponsible opposition that the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats have unfortunately practised in the past prevents Parliament from legislating and helps weaken its reputation among the people. Indeed, to vote against everything goes against the interests of the opposition parties as it erodes the influence that they can have on the people by keeping their negative votes for major issues which violate their basic political principles or which are in obvious conflict with the prime interests of the country.

On these last issues, on issues of this importance, we intend to give the government a fight such as this House has never seen before, with all the strength, the vigour and the determination that we can muster. On such major issues, we shall not hesitate to unite with other opposition parties to force the government to review its legislation under penalty of defeat in the House of Commons. (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 31)

Before rebutting the content of the SFT, Trudeau chastised the government for its decision to govern as if it had a majority and its decision to delay the opening of Parliament.

The Prime Minister said that he intended to govern as if he had a parliamentary majority. Those are courageous words from a leader whose government can be defeated any day and on any question by the combined forces of the opposition parties, a leader who failed to convince the people to give him a majority, a leader whose candidates won half a million votes fewer than the Liberal candidates.

Those are courageous words from a leader who cowardly delayed his inescapable meeting with Parliament longer than any other prime minister in our history. Indeed, almost five months have passed since the election, almost five months during which the Canadian people waited for the government to organize itself and find the courage to submit its measures to Parliament. (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 31)

On the substance of the SFT, and as a way of illustrating how the government “had frittered away the goodwill which the public extends to any government in the early

months of its mandate" (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 31), Trudeau focused his criticisms primarily on the following issues: the make-up of the new cabinet, in particular Clark's decision to appoint defeated PC candidate Robert De Cotret to the Senate and cabinet; the location of the Canadian Embassy in Israel; foreign policy; proposed Parliamentary reforms; the economy; and, federal-provincial relations (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, pp. 31-33).

However, the one issue that received the most attention was the government's stated plans to safeguard Canada's energy supply (i.e., the future of Petro-Canada). On this point, Trudeau stated:

We in the Liberal Party would be derelict in our duty to Canada and inconsistent with our own conviction if we did not fight the government with every means at our disposal over Petro-Canada. Whatever is done, our view is that Petro-Canada must remain one strong, healthy corporation that can act for Canada, that remains intact, that can be an instrument of national policy, that can take the necessary exploration risks, that can help protect all Canadians from the energy crisis. (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 36)

Consequently, as is customary for the official opposition in its Address in Reply to the SFT, the Liberals put forward the following amendment:

And this House condemns the attempt of the government to undermine Petro-Canada and supports the maintenance and expansion of our national petroleum corporation, as the property of all Canadians, as the largest Canadian-owned corporation in the petroleum industry and as a major instrument of Canadian energy policy. (*Debates* October 10, 1979, p. 37)

As for the NDP, while it was supportive of the government's plans to reform Parliament, to introduce freedom of information legislation and to charter a new course on federal-provincial relations, it was highly critical of its blueprint for the economy, in particular its decision to privatize Petro-Canada. The issue was the focus of Broadbent's Address in Reply to the SFT. Stating that the future of Petro-Canada was of "fundamental importance not only in the short run but in the long run of this country" (*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 47), he joined the Liberals in a non-confidence vote against the government on this issue. Consequently, the NDP put forward the following sub-amendment to the Liberal amendment:

That the amendment be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words:

"and this House calls in particular for the corporation to be designated as the sole importer of offshore oil, and for the corporation to open retail outlets to serve the people of Canada from coast to coast."  
(*Debates*, October 10, 1979, p. 47)

As for the SC Party, before commenting on its reaction to the SFT, we must first revisit the issue of its party status in the House. On October 9, 1979, the opening day of Parliament, the House defeated an amendment to include a member of the SC Party on the striking committee tasked with composing the House standing committees for the parliamentary session. The amendment was only supported by the five members of the SC caucus.<sup>88</sup> In essence, the outcome of this vote and the declarations made by other parties during the debate on the SC amendment to the

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<sup>88</sup>See Appendix J for a record of the key votes that occurred during 31<sup>st</sup> Parliament.

main motion basically refused the leader of the SC Party the standing of a leader of an official opposition party.

Another debate ensued when Roy, in his capacity as the leader of the SC Party, attempted to be recognized by the Speaker to give his Address in Reply to the SFT. On October 11, 1979, the Speaker did finally recognize Roy. However, citing the October 9 debate and vote as precedent, Roy was recognized once again as a member of the House (like any other member) and not as a party leader. The Speaker then suggested that the status of the SC Party in the House (particularly in the context of this minority Parliament) should be referred to a committee (most likely, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections) “so that it can be studied and this decision examined” (*Debates*, October 11, 1979, p. 69). This suggestion was accepted by all parties.

Despite their failure to be recognized as an official party, the *Créditiste* MPs continued to fight for what they believed to be their inalienable right as Parliamentarians. On October 26, the SC caucus even staged a melodramatic walkout from the House to protest its lack of official status (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 59).

When Roy finally gave his speech in response to the SFT, it obviously focused on the issue of his party’s status in the House. That said, the dominant theme of his

speech was the present fiscal and economic situation in Canada. On the SFT, he stated:

Mr. Speaker, I listened with deep emotion to the reading of the government program for this session. The speech was well drafted, from the handicapped to the youth, from energy to the merchant navy, not to mention the traditional new vision: everything was there. The one thing missing was their undertaking to lower taxes. But in that respect, Mr. Speaker, I suspect the government is keeping this issue for the budget speech. To proceed with a good analysis of that speech, we must compare it with the present economic situation in this country. (*Debates*, October 11, 1979, p. 71)

On the specific issues raised by the other opposition parties concerning the future of Petro-Canada, he concluded his speech by stating: "Before anything is done with Petro-Canada, we will have to know in precise terms the energy policy of the present government" (*Debates*, October 11, 1979, p. 74).

### *SFT Confidence Votes*

How did the House vote on the Liberal amendment and the NDP sub-amendment to the SFT? First, the NDP sub-amendment was supported only by the NDP caucus and one Liberal member. The outcome of the vote was 27 yeas and 223 nays. Therefore, the sub-amendment was resoundingly defeated.

As for the Liberal amendment, it was also defeated, but by a much narrower margin: 128 yeas and 137 nays. In the end, the NDP joined the Liberals whereas the five

SC members sided with the government, despite the government's refusal to recognize their party officially in the House. It should be noted, however, that 10 Liberals were absent for the vote.

To sum up, the Clark government managed to pass its first confidence tests with the direct help of the SC Party and the indirect help of the Liberals. Would this pattern continue and for how long?

### *Legislative Agenda*

Although the Clark government laid out an ambitious legislative agenda in its SFT, it did not get the opportunity to see it through. As stated by Troyer (1980),

And that's the rub in assessing the twenty-first government. Bills were introduced, speeches made, and debates held. But how does one measure the accomplishment of a Parliament that was destroyed before it had completed anything? It is like trying to get an insurance assessment for a piece of sculpture that has been shattered by an injudicious tap of the artist's chisel. (p. 165)

Difficult as it may be and recognizing that much of the Clark agenda was a work-in-progress at the time of its defeat, we will attempt to evaluate the Clark government's ability to pass its legislative agenda. Moreover, we will focus on what, if any, concessions the Clark government made as the need and willingness to make

office-related and policy concessions are often related to the governing party's relative bargaining power and agenda control.

In 49 sitting days, the PC government introduced 28 bills, most of them routine; only ten got beyond first reading, and of those ten, six received Royal Assent.<sup>89</sup> Three of the bills passed involved routine financial matters (C-10, *Borrowing Authority*; C-17, *Income Tax Act* amendment; and C-18, *Customs Tariff Act* amendment). The other three bills (C-6, *Old Age Security Act* amendment; C-11, *Postal Rates Act*; and C-23, *Supply* (interim)) were adopted without even a recorded vote, which suggests there was overall consensus vis-à-vis their passage.

### *Matters of Confidence and Other Important Votes*

During the short life of the 31<sup>st</sup> Parliament, there were a total of eight recorded votes, four of which were matters of confidence. Earlier, we discussed the two routine confidence votes that occurred in reply to the SFT. In addition to these two votes, there were two other votes that were considered matters of confidence: 1- the Liberals introduced a non-confidence motion and 2- the NDP put forward a sub-amendment in response to the PC budget. This latter vote will be discussed in detail in the following section. Before we examine the Liberals' non-confidence motion, a word on Bill C-20.

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<sup>89</sup> See Appendix K for a list of the government bills passed by the Clark government during the 31<sup>st</sup> Parliament.

Bill C-20, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit in respect of mortgage interest and home owner property tax*, was introduced in the House on October 29. Introducing this measure was a PC campaign promise. Although the Liberals had also planned a similar pledge, they announced their opposition to the bill. On December 4, there was a vote in the House to read Bill C-20 a second time and refer it to Committee of the Whole. The bill passed this hurdle in the legislative process fairly easily (yeas 138 and nays 114). The government received the support of 3 SC members and 3 Liberals and the NDP caucus voted against the bill as did the reduced Liberal contingency.

However, it was what occurred next that is of interest to us. As the opposition stalled the bill in the House, the government announced that it would introduce a motion to limit debate on the bill (i.e., closure). On December 10, the House voted 120 to 85 to limit the debate to no more than one more day. Once again the *Créditistes* voted with the government. While the vote on closure was not even close, it set the tone for what was to come. As described by Troyer (1980),

“That night”, said a research aide to an opposition party, “it was clear this government was going to roll right over anybody who got in their way. They really didn’t think the opposition members were prepared to say ‘shit’ if they had a mouthful; they’d take anything that Clark and Baker pushed at them. A lot of M.P.s started getting blood in their eye that night. And it was just seventy-two hours later that they got their own back and defeated the government.” (Troyer, 1980: 174)

### *The Liberal Non-confidence Motion*

On November 6, the Liberals used one of their allotted days to introduce a non-confidence motion on “severe economic hardship for Canadians”. The motion read:

That this House has no confidence in the government because it will cause severe economic hardship for the Canadian people this winter: first, through its neglect of the grave possibility of shortages in heating fuel; second, through its failure to support existing intergovernmental agreements on oil pricing and supply; third, through its inability to conclude agreements preventing immoderate price increases in the future; and, fourth, through its acceptance of record high interest rates. (*Debates*, November 6, 1979, p. 998)

The government survived this vote by a slim two-vote margin (yeas 138 and nays 140). Twenty-six NDP members voted with 112 Liberals for the motion and the five SC members voted with 135 PC members against the motion. Once again, the Clark government was saved due to the support of the SC. According to the 1979 *Annual Review*,

...support was secured by a personal guarantee from the prime minister to Social Credit leader Fabien Roy that the government would establish an energy supplies allocation board with power to institute rationing in order to assure supplies for independent petroleum dealers in Quebec and the Maritimes. (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 75)<sup>90</sup>

In addition to that policy concession, the Clark government also conceded to the SC caucus certain financing and parliamentary privileges that the *Créditistes* had been

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<sup>90</sup> The leader of the SC and the prime minister exchanged letters on this subject. The prime minister’s letter can be read on pages 1034 and 1035 of *Debates*.

seeking since the May general election, but that the government had denied until that point (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 75).

In the morning of November 6, the day of the second serious challenge to the Clark government's survival (the first being the SFT votes), Roy was summoned to a meeting with the Speaker of the House, James Jerome. Jerome informed Roy that after consulting with the other parties, it had been agreed to confer official party status on the SC. For example, during Question Period, the SC would be allowed 2 lead questions per week (5 sitting days) (Roy, 2005, p. 286).

The PCs therefore reluctantly gave official party status to the SC Party only after they had failed to lure more members into their fold and only when they desperately needed SC support to survive a crucial non-confidence motion.

The day following the vote, a cartoon appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*<sup>91</sup> depicting Clark sitting on Roy's lap: the puppet and the puppet master. Upon viewing this cartoon, Roy states in his memoirs:

*En la voyant, je me rends au bureau d'Adrien Lambert et je lui fais une prédiction: « J'ai nettement l'impression que le gouvernement sera défait au prochain vote parce que Joe Clark ne voudra pas prendre le risque d'être l'objet d'une autre caricature semblable. D'ailleurs son épouse ne le prendra pas. » Et j'ajoute: « J'aimerais me tromper... » (Roy, 2005, p. 288)*

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<sup>91</sup> The *Vancouver Sun*, November 7, 1979. The caption reads: "Ours is a government by consensus." This cartoon is reproduced in Roy, 2005, p. 288.

With the continued support of the five SC members in exchange for policy concessions and other benefits, is it plausible to believe, despite Roy's apprehension, that the Clark government would successfully implement its agenda and govern for a reasonable length of time?

To sum up this section on agenda control, in the early days of the Parliament in the fall of 1979, the Clark government seemed to have a tenuous grasp on the agenda. It did not attempt to formally secure the SC Party's support, the one party that could ensure its survival. In spite of this, in the early days of the Parliament, the SC helped the PCs survive crucial confidence votes. The government seemed prepared, albeit reluctantly, to make policy concessions and confer benefits to the SC, whenever absolutely necessary. From the perspective of the SC, the value attached to these concessions and benefits was high. Policy concessions were highly regarded by SC MPs because it confirmed their influence (i.e., kingmaker status) and gave much needed credibility to their political movement. Moreover, official party status in the House also gave them material benefits as well as credibility and a voice in the important debates of the day. Finally, benefits, such as additional funds for office, research, and salaries allowed them to do their work more effectively.

Our analysis thus far of the Clark government's bargaining power (weak) and its agenda control (low) leads us to the following conclusions: the Clark government's

future depended on the continued support of the SC Party and its relative position of weakness was the result of strategic considerations and calculations made by Clark and his advisors. He could have attempted to forge some type of alliance (formal or informal) with the *Créditistes*. However, the adoption of a medium-term electoral strategy led to a misunderstanding of the crucial importance of a short-term legislative strategy. Moreover, the by-election defeats, Clark's personal dwindling popularity, and his government's overall image of managerial incompetence made evident by some minor gaffes and missteps in the summer and early fall, before the opening of Parliament, would lead one to believe that the Clark government was not well positioned to implement its policy agenda, unless it started to nurture its relationship with the SC Party. The historical record shows that the Clark government fell before the Christmas recess. What happened? The following section looks at how the Clark government ended.

### **III      Dissolution: How the Clark Government Was Defeated**

Given that minority governments in Canada usually do not serve out their full terms, the circumstances surrounding their dissolution are of particular interest. To understand the defeat of the Clark government after only 49 sitting days, we must examine two key events that occurred in late fall of 1979: Trudeau's resignation as leader of the LPC and the Clark government's first and only budget.

## Trudeau's Resignation

On November 21, after much speculation and to no one's great surprise, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau announced his resignation as leader of the LPC. After almost 15 years as a dominant figure on the federal scene, and over 10 as prime minister, his resignation seemed to signal the end of an era. At the press conference announcing his departure, Trudeau stated: "There is no easy way or ideal time to leave, and there are always strong public and private reasons for going and for staying on. At one point in time one simply makes the decision as to what is best." As reported by *Le Devoir*, the main reason for his stepping down was that

*J'en suis venu à la conclusion que je n'étais pas l'homme à rebâtir le Parti libéral et à négocier un nouveau fédéralisme pendant la prochaine décennie... Il fallait un homme qui dirigerait le parti et engagerait les négociations fédérales-provinciales s'il était premier ministre, ou qui bâtirait la politique du Parti libéral s'il était chef de l'opposition... J'ai compris qu'il fallait un homme nouveau pour faire ça. (Le Devoir, November 26, 1979, as cited in Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 56)*

For the Clark government, Trudeau's resignation provided the PCs with some breathing room. While the Liberals would be busy in the next few months with choosing a new leader, culminating with a delegated convention scheduled for March 1980 in Winnipeg, the PCs could govern without fear of defeat, or so went the conventional thinking at the time. According to Courtney (1982), "it [was] widely accepted in federal political circles that an election called during the four or five months of a leadership campaign would be 'unfair' to the party involved in the process of choosing a new leader" (p. 82). This belief of an "election-free" period

was shared by many political observers and practitioners. For example, the *Toronto Sun* had announced: “Conservatives out of danger” (as cited in Bowering, 1999, p. 438). Two days after Trudeau’s announcement, the *Ottawa Citizen* wrote:

Now the Tories can be assured that their legislation will pass and that their term in office will continue at least into the spring of next year, because the last thing the leaderless Liberals want is to force an election. This clear sailing for the government will be guaranteed by the preoccupation of the Liberals with the parade of potential successors to Trudeau, all of whom will be vying for the limelight prior to the March convention. They will hardly have time to damage Tory legislation seriously. (as cited in Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 57)

According to Troyer (1980), the reaction of PC MPs was one of relief and even cocky arrogance: “‘We’re home free’, crowed a Tory M.P. ‘They won’t dare defeat us until after their leadership convention in March. We’ve got a blank cheque. We can do any goddamned thing we like.’” (pp. 29-30) It was in this context, less than three weeks after Trudeau’s resignation, that the government tabled its first and only budget.

### The Crosbie Budget<sup>92</sup>

On December 11, John Crosbie, the Minister of Finance, introduced the government’s budget. Like SFTs and supply motions, the passing of budgets are crucial tests for governments, especially minority governments. In this section, we will briefly examine the contents of the budget, the opposition reaction to the budget,

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<sup>92</sup> For a complete account of the Crosbie budget and its aftermath, see Jeffrey Simpson’s (1980) chapter: The Collapse of the Government, pp. 3-47.

the government reaction to the opposition reaction, the negotiations (or lack thereof) to secure its passage, the crucial vote, and, finally, the surprising defeat of the government. (It is important to keep in mind that the budget was read in the House late Tuesday afternoon (December 11) and the Government fell late Thursday evening (December 13). These events described below all occurred in a feverish period that lasted only about 48 hours.)

The budget contained tax increases on petroleum products, tobacco, alcohol, and corporate profits, and it announced higher unemployment premiums. The measure that proved to be the most contentious was the introduction of an additional 18-cents-per-gallon (about 4 cents per litre) excise tax on gasoline and other fuels.

This tax was designed to increase revenue by \$2.5 billion a year and promote conservation. A new energy tax would give the federal government half of any revenues derived from the yearly increases in the price of crude oil above \$2 per barrel. With projected increases of \$4 a barrel in 1980 and \$4.50 in subsequent years, this tax would harvest an estimated \$3.6 billion annually by 1983-4. An energy tax credit for 1981 would cushion the impact of these increases for families earning less than \$21,380 a year. (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 76)

Other measures included:

- a temporary 'small business development bond' to eliminate federal taxes on loans up to \$500,000 for small businesses;
- a \$250 million employer tax credit programme aimed at the creation of 100,000 jobs;
- deductibility of a spouse's salary paid by an unincorporated small business;
- taxation of income from registered retirement savings plans at half rates;
- creation of a federal-provincial energy bank; and,

- a once-in-a-lifetime deferral for farmers of the tax on a maximum \$100,000 taxable capital gains from the sale of a farm. (*Debates*, December 11, 1979, pp. 2256-67)

Crosbie had described these measures as “short-term pain for long-term gain”. Introducing such unpopular measures as expenditure cuts and tax increases is not an easy sell for a government in the best of times, and this is even more true in a minority situation. Simpson (1980) provided the following assessment of the budget and its chances of approval:

It was a budget for a minority Government. Six weeks before the budget was introduced, Government House Leader Walter Baker had remarked at an inner Cabinet meeting that the budget had an ‘extremely slim’ chance of parliamentary approval. But Baker’s comment was uttered before Pierre Trudeau resigned as Liberal leader. His impending departure led the Conservatives to believe that the budget, despite its contentious clauses, would sail through the Commons while the Liberals were engrossed in their leadership review. (p. 231)

According to one observer,

Such a budget clearly indicated that the Conservatives were acting not only ‘as if they had a majority’, but also as if there was no possible combination of circumstances which might coalesce the opposition parties in Parliament and bring the Government down. (Landes, 1981, p. 103)

Russell (2008), put it much more bluntly, stating: “In the Clark government’s precarious parliamentary situation, it amounted to political suicide” (p. 37).

### *Opposition reaction to the budget*

The reaction of the opposition parties to the budget was fast and furious. Overall, many opposition members thought the government had blundered by tabling such a budget and, most were confident that Canadians would not stomach high interest rates, high fuel prices, and gloomy forecasts.

Liberal members who were just waiting for an issue on which to defeat the government, felt they had found it with this budget, especially the 18-cents-per-gallon excise tax on gasoline. According to Plamondon (2009), senior Cabinet member Marc Lalonde “concluded, ‘People will never accept that 18 cent excise tax.’ Liberals, he threatened, were prepared to defeat the government on this measure alone. It was not an idle threat” (p. 303).

It was widely reported that Trudeau told his caucus colleagues to vote their conscience on the budget, but made it clear that if the government were to fall, he would not lead them in the election. Despite Trudeau’s pronouncements, his closest and staunchest supporters were confident in their ability to convince him to stay on and fight another election (Clarkson & McCall, 1990).

The day after the budget was introduced in the House, the Liberals tabled an amendment to the Minister of Finance’s motion “That this House approves in

general the budgetary policy of the government” (*Debates*, December 11, 1979, p. 2256) and it read:

That all the words after “that” be struck out, and that the following be added: this House condemns the government for its budget, which will place an unfair and unnecessary burden on higher gasoline prices, higher fuel oil prices, and higher taxes on middle and lower income Canadians. (*Debates*, December 12, 1979, p. 2299)

According to Simpson (1980), “once the Liberals had come to the conclusion that they had to oppose the budget, the question was: ‘should the party vote with a few members absent or in full force, even if this meant risking an election?’” (p. 9). One thing was certain, despite being leaderless, the Liberals were definitely showing signs of being prepared to defeat the government (Russell, 2008, p. 37).

As for the NDP, there was never any doubt that it would vote against such a “regressive” budget that failed to provide any tax relief for low-income Canadians and whacked them with higher energy prices. As for defeating the government and returning to the polls, the leader of the NDP, Broadbent, personally favoured an early election call before the Liberals replaced Trudeau (Simpson, 1980, p. 17). Consequently, the NDP tabled the following sub-amendment to the Liberal amendment.<sup>93</sup>

That the amendment be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following

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<sup>93</sup> Under parliamentary rules, the House would vote first on the NDP sub-amendment to the Liberals’ motion of non-confidence.

words: and this House unreservedly condemns the government for its outright betrayal of its election promises to lower interest rates, to cut taxes, and to stimulate the growth of the Canadian economy without a mandate from the Canadian people for such a reversal. (*Debates*, December 121, 1979, p. 2304)

Finally, the initial reaction of the SC caucus also hinted to difficult times ahead for the government. SC leader Roy “had found nothing good in the budget and something bad in the excise tax on gasoline” (Fletcher & Wallace, 1981, p. 77). In his memoirs, Roy (2005) wrote the following passage to describe his reaction to the budget and to what he perceived as Mr. Clark’s apparent disconnect between reality and fiction:

*Étant minoritaire, le gouvernement fait montre d’une grande irresponsabilité, Joe Clark ne réalise pas une seule minute que, dans ces conditions<sup>94</sup>, il nous sera difficile de l’appuyer et de sauver son gouvernement une autre fois. Clark prouve à nouveau qu’il prend ses rêves pour des réalités; il semble vivre et gouverner dans un autre monde. (pp. 290-291)*

Despite his dislike of the budget and his frustrations with the prime minister, Roy initially would not say how the *Créditistes* would vote on the non-confidence motions, stating only that his personal preference would be to abstain. He seemed to be keeping the door open for possible negotiations with the government. According to Simpson (1980), “they [the *Créditistes*] were playing for time, waiting to see what the Conservatives would offer for their support (p. 14).

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<sup>94</sup> Here Roy is alluding to the proposal of introducing an excise tax on gasoline at this fragile juncture in the Canadian economy.

It is important to note that around the same time as these events were playing themselves out (i.e., Trudeau's resignation and budget preparation), it appears that members of the PC and SC parties were making attempts at forging an informal coalition between the two parties. The members in question are PC MP David Kilgour (Edmonton-Strathcona) and SC M.P. Armand Caouette (Abitibi). Kilgour and Caouette were seatmates in the House. PC House leader Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton) had supposedly placed Kilgour, who spoke French, next to the *Créditistes* to act as a liaison with the group throughout the session. In Simpson's (1980) words:

In mid-November, Kilgour had suggested a Conservative-Créditiste coalition to Armand Caouette, who, to Kilgour's surprise, greeted the suggestion enthusiastically, offering to take it to the Créditiste caucus. Several days later, Caouette told Kilgour that the Créditistes were prepared to enter into an informal coalition with the Conservatives to guarantee the Government's survival for eighteen months. There were no strings attached to the offer, although the Créditistes would have undoubtedly expected subsequent recompense and recognition from the Conservatives. But when Kilgour and Caouette discussed the idea with Clark after a Question Period in late November, and suggested a meeting between Clark and Fabien Roy, the Prime Minister seemed indifferent to the idea. (p. 29)

Clark's reaction is consistent with his preferred strategy to starve the SC Party in order "to improve his own party's fortunes in Quebec" (Simpson, 1980, p. 29). Also, one can only surmise that he was bolstered in his thinking at that time by the imminent departure of the Liberal leader.

### *The government reaction to the opposition reaction*

By all accounts, during the first 24 hours or so after the budget speech was read in the House, there was a lot of talking, strategizing and plotting going on in each of the opposition camps. While positions were solidifying, the government was apparently carrying on with its business, blissfully unaware of the mounting opposition. As recounted by Simpson (1980, pp. 20-23), at a breakfast meeting on December 13, the day of the vote (the vote was scheduled to take place at 9:45 pm), Clark's legislative assistant, Nancy Jamieson, informed him and his closest advisors<sup>95</sup> that the government was going to lose the vote: it simply did not have the numbers necessary to carry the vote. Initially, her announcement was greeted with disbelief. Even upon being presented with some hard facts, the PC brain trust dismissed the warning, falsely believing that the Liberals would not dare bring the government down; and, if they did, the PCs would win a snap election, despite the fact that they were trailing the Liberals by almost 20 points in public opinion polls (see Appendix L).

At this point in time, given its predicament, the government still had some options open to it. One, it could call the opposition's bluff and do nothing and hope that the five SC members would abstain and/or enough Liberals would come down with the "diplomatic flu" (i.e., purposely not show up for the vote). However, this was a risky strategy, compounded by the fact that potentially up to six PC members were

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<sup>95</sup> Clark's inner circle included Bill Neville (chief of staff), Senator Lowell Murray, Jim Gillies (policy advisor), Ian Green, (executive assistant), Donald Doyle (assistant chief of staff), Jock Osler (press secretary) and André Payette (director of communications).

unavailable to vote, according to PC whip Bill Kempling (Burlington) (Plamondon, 2009, p. 303).

An alternative option would have been to buy some time by simply postponing the budget vote.<sup>96</sup> As discussed earlier, in the Westminster model of government, the government-of-the-day sets the parliamentary timetable. “A delay would have given the government time to marshal its forces and bring the Cr ditistes on side” (Plamondon, 2009, p. 305). It would also give the Liberals more time to change their position (Simpson, 1980, p. 24). It appears that this possibility was raised and summarily dismissed by Clark and his advisors.

Traditionally, the timing of votes is the type of advice that House leaders give to their leaders. As we saw in the previous chapter, a skilled House leader is an invaluable asset in a minority Parliament because this actor is probably best suited to gauge the mood of the House and make the appropriate calculations to ensure the government’s survival and ability to implement its agenda. According to one close observer, this episode demonstrated that perhaps Clark’s House leader was not up to the task.

Baker, however, did not press that option on Clark; he merely raised the possibility and did not argue with the Prime Minister’s refusal to consider it. A man with a stronger personality would have persisted, explaining that the Government was taking an avoidable risk in insisting on having

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<sup>96</sup> In his memoirs, SC leader Roy states that he was in favour of this option and appealed to the Prime Minister’s Office to consider it, but to no avail (Roy, 2005, p. 292).

the vote that night. Baker might have lost the argument, but he did not even try. An affable man who looked like a big teddy bear, Baker abhorred personal confrontations. He was not a strong enough House leader to argue with the Prime Minister. (Simpson, 1980, p. 25)

However, it is the leader ultimately who must bear responsibility for his government's decisions. Simpson (1980) offers the following interpretation to explain Clark's rationale for not postponing the budget votes:

Joe Clark did not want his Government to be labelled a lame duck, even for a few days, while Parliament awaited a showdown. Any delay in the budget vote would be interpreted as a sign of weakness; from his first day in office, Clark had tried to confound those who said he was unfit for the job of Prime Minister by showing how firm and decisive he could be. He had reaffirmed his party's election promise to move the Canadian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem the day after he became Prime Minister. He had stared down most of his inner Cabinet and insisted that PetroCanada be turned into a private company. He had dismissed warnings about the political impact of the excise tax, believing the party needed to fulfil its election promise to reduce the federal deficit. Now he would show the Liberals and the country that he was not about to be pushed around in the Commons. (p. 25)

A third option open to the government would be to negotiate the support of the *Créditistes* to ensure safe passage of its budget. While this option was seen as a legitimate course of action, especially in a minority Parliament, it too was not given serious consideration by Clark and his advisors. Nevertheless, there were some efforts worth mentioning made by members from both parties to come to an agreement.

### *The (non) negotiations*

In the afternoon of the day of the vote, after a special *Créditiste* caucus meeting, Roy emerged to confirm his earlier preference: SC members would abstain. Later that afternoon, PC emissary Kilgour, met with the SC leader. Their meeting is reported to have lasted about 10 minutes. According to many accounts, Roy was prepared to support the budget, if the government was prepared to commit all revenues from the 18-cent-per-gallon excise tax increase to the Government of Quebec or to energy projects in Quebec (Plamondon, 2009; Simpson, 1980;). This offer was rejected out of hand by Clark and his inner circle.

Also, according to Plamondon (2009), there was a second more serious offer made by the SC:

Some 15 minutes before the confidence vote, the *Créditistes* made another offer. They would support the government if a tax credit was given to the poor to help offset the increase in the gas tax. It meant a tax expenditure of \$1 billion, a huge blow to the government's effort to reduce the deficit. But it was a serious offer that was worth considering. Ray Hnatyshyn, the energy minister, recommended to Clark that he accept. But Clark was in no mood to back down. Fabien Roy claimed Clark was too proud for his own good. Clark denied a legitimate offer had been made, adding, 'They certainly didn't make it to me because they knew I wouldn't have taken it seriously.' (p. 305)

Curiously, SC leader Fabien Roy does not specifically mention these negotiations in his memoirs. However, not wishing to see the government defeated and open to negotiating a solution that was acceptable to both parties, he recounts how he

personally instructed his political adviser to discreetly engage the Prime Minister's Office to see if they can come to some sort of compromise in exchange for their support. To his chagrin and amazement, his overtures were completely ignored. In his own words:

*Pour éviter si possible la chute du gouvernement, je donne mandat à mon conseiller politique de communiquer avec le bureau de Joe Clark, dans la plus grande discrétion, afin de ne pas alerter les libéraux, et encore moins la presse. Nous voulons qu'ensemble nous puissions trouver une formule pour pondérer la situation engendrée par l'annonce de cette taxe, en procédant par étape ou en apportant quelques amendements. Nous sommes ouverts à d'autres propositions. Nos appels répétés n'obtiennent aucune réponse. On a beau laisser des messages, rien, toujours rien. Aucun retour d'appel. (Roy, 2005, p. 291)*

In order to make sense of the PCs' attitude, we are reminded by Simpson (1980) that

Joe Clark was not afraid of an election, and he had decided before the parliamentary session that he would neither form a coalition with the *Créditistes* to secure a parliamentary majority nor even develop a close working relationship with them. (p. 29)

In short, despite his minority position, Clark had decided early in his mandate that he would govern as much as possible without the *Créditistes*.

### *The vote*

To recap, unwilling to appear weak, the Clark government decided against using its control of House scheduling to delay the budget votes until its absent members

could return. In addition, it made no serious attempt to negotiate a deal with the tiny but crucial SC caucus. Finally, convinced that the leaderless LPC would retreat from a confrontation, and confident of its chances of winning a snap election if the Liberals did not, the government did nothing to avoid defeat.

In the late evening of December 13, 1979, shortly after 10:00 pm, the vote on the NDP amendment to the Liberal motion went forward and the results were as follows: 139 yeas and 133 nays. The government was defeated by a slim margin of six votes. In the end, 112 Liberals<sup>97</sup> voted with the 27-member NDP caucus, the five SC members abstained, and three PCs were absent.<sup>98</sup> By losing this vote, the Clark government became the first Canadian government to be brought down by the defeat of its budget; and, Clark himself became the shortest serving Canadian prime minister after winning a general election.

### *The defeat*

After only 259 days in power and 49 House sitting days, the PC government had fallen, having accomplished few of its legislative or political objectives. The post-mortems of the short-lived government were brutal. Here are but four:

Perceiving the opposition parties as individually unwilling to contest an election, ignoring fairly evident danger signals (refusal of the Liberals to

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<sup>97</sup> Montreal MP Serge Joyal, part of Canada's delegation at the United Nations in New York, was the only Liberal absent for the vote.

<sup>98</sup> External Affairs Minister Flora MacDonald was at a NATO meeting in Brussels, Alvin Hamilton was in the hospital, and Lloyd Crouse was vacationing in the South Pacific.

accept 'pairing'<sup>99</sup> before the crucial House vote), and unwilling to compromise in order to postpone impending defeat (i.e. the overtures from the opposition parties to delay the vote were apparently discounted), the Government convinced itself that even if it were defeated on the budget and even if it was trailing twenty percentage points in the polls, that an election would return it to office. By such gross miscalculations do Governments die. (Landes, 1981, p.103)

In time history will simplify the complexities. The management of minority government is one of the most delicate balancing acts in public life; and history would judge simply that Joe Clark had fallen off on a day when there was no Sacred safety net. Whether the fall had been caused by faulty timing, miscalculation, a mis-step, the cruel gale of opposition, or the simple fact that the kid up there on the high wire just wasn't ready yet for the centre ring would be of little interest. The spotlight had been his, the fall his fall, the failure his to carry into history. (Troyer, 1980, p. 187)

*Quant aux conservateurs de Joe Clark, ils sont chanceux que le ridicule ne tue pas! En politique, adopter une attitude plus stupide que celle-là est pratiquement impossible. Ils se sont jetés tête baissée dans l'abîme!* (Roy, 2005, p. 295)

Finally, for his part, Plamondon (2009) summed it up by stating: "...the burden of his youth and inexperience was too much to overcome" (p. 296).

### *Summary*

In the end, due to a host of factors, such as "misplaced confidences", "faulty assumptions", "tragic miscalculations" and "inexperience in governing" (Simpson, 1980, p. x; Troyer, 1980, p. 17), Clark's 1979 minority government was extremely

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<sup>99</sup> 'Pairing' is a Parliamentary tradition in which two parties on opposing sides of an issue agree to have one MP each abstain.

short: only Meighen's 1926 minority government was shorter than Clark's government. However, as pointed out by Russell (2008),

Clark's minority government need not have been so short lived. Its brevity was the result of its leader's unwillingness to deal realistically with the Conservatives' minority position and the Conservative leadership's unfounded confidence in being able to score a knockout blow in an election if defeated on an early non-confidence vote. (p. 36)

As argued by Bothwell and Granatstein (2000), Clark and his advisors "had banked on the Liberals appointing a new leader to fight the general election" (p. 208). However, on December 18, in a stunning reversal, Trudeau announced that he had changed his mind and would stay on as leader of the LPC. On February 18, 1980, the Liberals won the election and formed a majority government. After a brief interlude on the front benches, the PCs were relegated back to the opposition benches.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we applied our theoretical framework to Clark's 1979 minority government. Our analysis confirms our hypothesis that building majorities in minority situations in Canada is a function of the relative strength of a government's bargaining power and agenda control and that minority governments with weak bargaining power and low agenda control tend not to last long or manage to pass much of their legislative agenda. The Clark government had both weak bargaining power and low agenda control. Consequently, it was required to make policy and

office-related concessions on every important piece of legislation in order to survive and secure support for its legislative agenda. In the end, the Clark government was unwilling to create the necessary alliances to ensure its survival or to make the required compromises and concessions to see its bills passed. This was most notable in the lead-up to the introduction of its first and only budget and the subsequent confidence votes. The Clark government could have enhanced its chances of survival and its capacity to pass its legislative agenda had it acted differently and done more to secure the support of the SC caucus. This path was not taken for strategic and political reasons.

What have we learned from the Clark government about our hypothesis on minority government in Canada? What lessons can be drawn from this short minority experience? First, the Clark government clearly highlights the pitfalls of “governing like a majority” when in a minority situation. Second, it seriously puts in question the conventional wisdom that the governing party has a “free pass” when the official opposition is leaderless and in the midst of a leadership race (Courtney, 1982). Third, this minority experience emphasizes the importance of short term parliamentary strategy as opposed to longer term electoral strategy. Fourth, it highlights the crucial role of parliamentary norms and procedures (e.g., parliamentary calendar) as a means of avoiding or triggering defeat in the House. Finally, concessions, whether policy or other (e.g., office benefits), when used appropriately, can be a legitimate and effective survival tool when exchanged for

opposition support on parliamentary votes. The Clark government's lack of capacity in these areas of legislative politics led to its early demise.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **HARPER (1)**

#### **2006 - 2008**

Canada's 39<sup>th</sup> general election, held on January 23, 2006, was significant for many reasons. For one, after more than 12 years of Liberal rule (three majority governments from 1993 to 2004 and one minority government from 2004 to 2005), the Canadian voters elected a Conservative (minority) government and returned to power a political party that had been reduced to only 2 seats a little more than a decade ago (Turcotte, 2006, p. 283). Secondly, Stephen Harper, who just two years previously had been leader of the Canadian Alliance, became one of only seven Conservative leaders to win a federal election (Plamondon, 2009, p. 427). Thirdly, the previous government's defeat in Parliament did not come about as a result of any critical matter of policy or principle (LeDuc, 2007, p. 716). Flanagan (2007a) reminds us that "this was the only time in Canadian history that a federal government has fallen on a non-confidence motion unattached to a specific issue" (p. 229). The 17-month-old Liberal minority government, led by Paul Martin, was defeated on a simple yet explicitly worded motion of non-confidence that read: "That this House has lost confidence in the government."<sup>100</sup> Although the Liberal government had certainly been weakened in the public opinion by an on-going judicial inquiry into the "sponsorship scandal", which involved various advertising schemes that had been set up in the wake of the 1995 referendum on Quebec

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<sup>100</sup> The motion was introduced by Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, and was supported by the other two opposition parties.

sovereignty to help promote federalism, none of this was mentioned as justification in the motion.<sup>101</sup>

On January 23, 2006, the Canadian voters rendered their collective judgment: they too had lost confidence in the Martin-led Liberal government and were prepared to give Harper's Conservatives the opportunity to govern, albeit in a minority context, 31 seats short of a majority. The seat breakdown was as follows:

| <b>Figure 7.1    Seat count of the 39<sup>th</sup> General Election (January 23, 2006)</b> |  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-----|
| Conservative Party of Canada                                                               |  | 124 |
| Liberal Party of Canada                                                                    |  | 103 |
| Bloc Québécois                                                                             |  | 51  |
| New Democratic Party                                                                       |  | 29  |
| Other                                                                                      |  | 1   |
| Total                                                                                      |  | 308 |
| Number of seats required for majority = 155                                                |  |     |

The day after the election, Martin told Governor General Michaëlle Jean that he intended to resign and advised her to ask Harper to form a government (Russell, 2008, p. 45). On February 6, 2006, Harper and his government were sworn in. Stephen Harper became Canada's 22<sup>nd</sup> Prime Minister and the leader of Canada's 11<sup>th</sup> minority government since Confederation.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> For more details, see LeDuc, 2007, pp. 716-720.

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix M for a chronology of the main events of the life of this government.

In this chapter we will apply our majority building framework to this government, which represents our 4<sup>th</sup> type of minority government: long duration / low output. Amongst Canada's eight minority governments since 1957, Harper (1) ranks high in duration (3<sup>rd</sup> overall with 292 House sitting days) yet ranks low on legislative output (6<sup>th</sup> overall with a passing rate of 52% of government bills).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the Conservatives' bargaining power post-election; the second section assesses the government's control of the agenda; and, the third section analyzes how this government ended.

## **I      Bargaining Power**

As was the case in previous chapters, this section will focus on the interparty dynamics and intra-party cohesion of the various parties in the House, which are key to determining the relative strength of each party's bargaining power, in particular that of the governing party. This will help us to understand the use (or non-use) of majority building strategies by the governing party to ensure its viability and effectiveness. Therefore, in this section, we will first assess the make-up of the House, and then, we will provide a picture of the state of each the parties following the general election.

### *Make-up of the House of Commons*

As is the case with most Parliaments, especially those that last long, the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament was a volatile period in terms of the make-up of the House. From the time the Harper government was sworn-in, until the dissolution of Parliament on September 7, 2008, there were 12 resignations (for personal, political, and professional reasons)<sup>103</sup>, 1 death<sup>104</sup>, 7 floor crossings<sup>105</sup>, and 9 by-elections<sup>106</sup>. Also, Peter Milliken, the Liberal MP representing Kingston and the Islands, was re-elected Speaker of the House at the opening of Parliament. In total, these events affected 30 MPs or 10% of all those elected on January 23, 2006.

Due to these events, the party standings in the House were in a constant state of flux throughout the life of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Therefore, the exact seat breakdown of each of the parties ranged from the following number of seats at any given time:

|                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Conservative Party of Canada | 124 - 127 |
| Liberal Party of Canada      | 94 - 103  |
| <i>Bloc Québécois</i>        | 48 - 51   |
| New Democratic Party         | 29 - 30   |
| Independents                 | 1 - 5     |
| Vacancies                    | 0 - 7     |

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<sup>103</sup> See Parliament of Canada website:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/VacanciesByResignationOrDeath.aspx?Language=E>

<sup>104</sup> Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny) passed away on August 28, 2006.

<sup>105</sup> The following MPs crossed the floor of the House of Commons or changed political affiliation: David Emerson (Vancouver Kingsway), Garth Turner (Halton), Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette-Témiscouata-Les Basques), Bill Casey (Cumberland-Coldchester-Musquodoboit Valley), Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay-Superior North), Wajid Khan (Mississauga-Streetsville), and Blair Wilson (West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Country).

<sup>106</sup> By-elections were held on November 27, 2006 in Repentigny and London North Centre; on September 17, 2007 in Roberval-Lac-Saint-Jean, Outremont, and Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot; and, on March 17, 2008 in Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Willowdale, Vancouver Quadra, and Toronto Centre.

Despite these variances, the following elements remained stable:

- The Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) needed the support of just one of the three opposition parties to win votes in the House.
- The government could only be defeated with the help of the LPC. In other words, the NDP and the *Bloc Québécois* (Bloc) needed the Liberals to defeat the government – they could not do it alone.

Given this, what was the likelihood of the Conservatives gaining parliamentary support from any of the opposition parties given the parties' position on the left-right political spectrum, their past experiences of political cooperation, their respective policy views, and the intra-party dynamics of each party? First, we need to examine the state of the governing Conservatives and their leader, Stephen Harper.

### *The Conservative Party of Canada*

As mentioned, on election night 2006, Canadian voters elected a plurality of Conservatives to Parliament. However, with just 36% of the total vote, Harper's Conservatives won 124 of 308 seats, 31 seats short of a majority (155 seats is required for a majority). With this seat count, this government found itself in a weaker minority position than any other minority government in Canadian history, including the three minority governments studied thus far.<sup>107</sup> What was the

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<sup>107</sup> See Appendix A.

likelihood that this leader and this party could secure the support of the other parties in Parliament to survive confidence votes and pass its legislative program? The answer to this question begins with an examination of this relatively new political entity, and, in particular, its leader.

Stephen Harper is a founding member of the Reform Party of Canada (Reform), a Western-based political party that grew out of a coalition of discontented Western interest groups. He was first elected to the House in 1993 as the Reform MP for Calgary West. In 1997, he resigned his seat to become Vice President (later President) of the National Citizens Coalition (NCC), a right-wing lobby group that advocates for individual freedoms and accountable government. In 2002, he succeeded Stockwell Day as leader of the Canadian Alliance (the successor to the Reform) and returned to Parliament as leader of the opposition. In 2003, he reached an agreement with PC leader Peter MacKay for the merger of their two parties to form the CPC. He was selected as the party's first leader in March 2004.<sup>108</sup>

Following the 2006 general election, Hébert (2007) summarized Harper's political journey by stating:

Within the space of four years, Stephen Harper brought the Canadian Alliance back from the dead. He put an end to the feud that had divided the Conservative movement for more than ten years. He became the diffident leader of a new party, and brought it to power in less than two years. (p. 263)

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<sup>108</sup> See the Prime Minister's website: <http://www.pm.gc.ca>

While much has been written about Harper's personality and leadership style, we will focus here on the personality and leadership traits that provide us with insights into how he would approach governing in a minority context. The following is by no means a measure of the man or the politician, but rather focuses on the public and political actor, who, following the 2006 general election, was poised to lead a minority government.

Those who have followed his career, both within and outside the party, have described his personality and leadership style as being "confrontational", "autocratic", and "controlling" (Plamondon, 2009; Wells, 2006) and not always prepared to be a team player and team builder (Manning, 2002, p. 74 & p. 399). Others have commented that Harper often leaves the impression of someone who is "stubborn", "mean-spirited", and even, "vindictive" (Plamondon, 2009, p. 462; Wells, 2006, p. 310). On this point, author Bob Plamondon (2009), a leading expert in Canadian Conservative politics, stated: "Being tough, even dark, appears to be Harper's natural emotional predisposition. But if there is a fine line between tough and mean, Harper is on its edge" (p. 455). In this same vein, a descriptor that is often used to describe Harper the politician is "excessively partisan". For example, William Johnson (2005), biographical author of *Stephen Harper and the Future of Canada*, stated:<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> See also Galloway (2007), D. Martin (2006), and Riley (2007).

He constantly displays an excess of partisanship. From the time he was elected to the Commons, his attacks on Chrétien, and now on Martin, have often been over the top. There is a harshness, a lack of humour, humanity, and moderation, that disregards the traditions of Parliament where all members have a right to be treated as honourable. (p. 406)

Given these testimonials, the picture that emerges is that of a leader to whom conciliation, accommodation, and compromise do not come easy (Plamondon, 2009, p. 433). On the surface, this does not necessarily bode well for a leader leading a minority government and seeking opposition support for his legislative agenda. On the other hand, many have recognized Harper's strong policy and strategic mind. Preston Manning, leader of the Reform from 1987 to 2000, wrote that he believed Harper had "a sound grasp of public policy" and "a brilliant strategic mind" (Manning, 2002, p. 399). On this latter point, columnist and author Paul Wells (2006) concluded that "Stephen Harper is a strategist before he is anything else" (Wells, 2006, p. 300). These strategic abilities could serve him well in navigating the sometimes challenging maze of minority politics.

As for Harper's political and philosophical orientations, he could be described as a small-c conservative with libertarian inclinations. In order to understand Harper's conservatism, it is useful to examine what has been labelled the "Calgary School", a group of like-minded academics from the University of Calgary's political science and history departments. In the mid-1980s and early 1990s Harper obtained both a

bachelor's and a master's degree in economics from the University of Calgary.

According to author Lloyd MacKay (2005):

The role of the Calgary School is important in understanding the ground of Harper's social, economic, and political thinking. It indicates something of the seed source, the planting of the tree, and the strengthening and spreading of its roots. But consideration of the school's role does not extend to the point of examining how large the tree has grown and how far out its branches have spread. (p. 141)

The people most often associated with this school are Tom Flanagan, Ted Morton, Rainer Knopff, Barry Cooper, and David Bercuson (MacKay, 2005, p. 144). A 2004 *Walrus Magazine* article by Marci McDonald describes the school's political philosophy as "a rambunctious, Rocky Mountain brand of libertarianism that has become synonymous with Western alienation" and describes its agenda in the following terms: "lower taxes, less federal government, and free markets unfettered by social programs such as Medicare that keep citizens from being forced to pull up their own socks" (p. 36).

Members of this school of thought, including Harper, signed what is now commonly referred to as the "firewall letter", which was an open letter to the then Premier of Alberta, Ralph Klein. This letter appeared in *The National Post* on January 24, 2001 and "was designed to get Albertans thinking seriously about building legal and economic 'firewalls' around their province to protect against what they saw as a potential new set of federal incursions on provincial autonomy" (MacKay, 2005, p.

72).<sup>110</sup> The fact that Harper signed this letter gives us some insights into his political thinking, especially with regard to the role of government in general (minimalist) and that of the federal government in particular (respect for the provincial jurisdictions as defined by the constitution of Canada).

As a member of the Reform, Harper was described as a “conservative” and as someone who “saw issues from a political spectrum of right and left”; “wanted to build a principled conservative party”; “could identify with the view of libertarians”; “was inclined to leadership and serious debate”; “was deeply thoughtful and analytical”; and, “was distrustful of political elites” (Plamondon, 2009, p. 392). More to the point, according to Plamondon (2009), Harper “was an ideologue then, uncompromising and unsympathetic to any accommodation or special status for Québec, with a taste for dogmatic right-wing conservative solutions to every problem under the sun” (p. 468).

These beliefs put Harper at odds with not only mainstream Canadians but also with many self-described “progressive” Conservatives or “big-tent” Tories, such as Joe Clark, Flora MacDonald, and Lowell Murray, to name only a few.<sup>111</sup> In fact, in 2004, when Harper announced his candidacy for leader of the new CPC, he said he did not, at least initially, want to be called a Tory. Harper is reported to have said:

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<sup>110</sup> For more details, see Johnson, 2005, pp. 284-285.

<sup>111</sup> See Johnson, 2005: 336. Also, to this day, this theme continues to make headlines. See L. Martin (2010) and Simpson (2010).

“It’s actually not a label I love. I am more comfortable with a more populist tradition of conservatism. Toryism has the historical context of hierarchy and elitism and is a different kind of political philosophy. It’s not my favourite term, but we’re probably stuck with it.” (as cited in Plamondon, 2006, p. 346 and Plamondon, 2009, p. 410)

However, cognizant of the fact that many Canadians felt that “both the party and its leader were too far from the political mainstream to win a national mandate” (LeDuc, 2007, p. 718), Harper moved the Conservatives’ policy agenda toward the centre of the spectrum. According to authors, Pammett and Dornan (2006),

The Conservative Party thus came more and more to resemble the old Progressive Conservative Party, rather than the more extreme Reform and Alliance parties that had contributed to its formation. The Conservatives made a deliberate attempt to associate themselves with the previous conservative parties in Canadian history, including the Progressive Conservative Party led by Brian Mulroney and John Diefenbaker, and ultimately the party originally led by John A. Macdonald. (p. 10)

In the end, this strategy worked as the Conservatives under Harper’s leadership formed the government following the 2006 vote. While Harper’s Conservatives were successful in portraying themselves as “simply the current manifestation of earlier conservative parties” (Pammett and Dornan, 2006, p. 10), once in office, how would they govern? Would they pursue a moderate course and try to build support for their legislative initiatives? One thing is clear, like other Conservative parties before it, Harper’s Conservatives had no natural ideological ally in the House.

### *The Liberal Party of Canada*

According to author Lawrence LeDuc (2007), the context of the 2006 general election was shaped by two long-running political stories. The first, which we have just examined, concerns the division and the subsequent reunification of the right that led to the creation of the CPC with Stephen Harper as its first leader. The second story that shaped the electoral context in 2006 is that of the Liberals' "civil war" (LeDuc, 2007, p. 717). As pointed out by Stephen Clarkson (2006), author of several books and articles on the LPC, "After two decades of internal strife between Jean Chrétien and John Turner, then Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, the Liberal Party had become hostage to its feuding backrooms" (p. 53-54).

Paul Martin had succeeded Jean Chrétien as leader of the LPC and prime minister of Canada in December 2003. According to Pammett and Dornan (2006), the Liberals had been in disarray ever since the election in 2004, which put them into a minority situation in the House (p. 9). Clarkson (2006) argues that Martin's two years in office as prime minister and at the helm of the LPC were marked by indecisive and poor political judgment. In a paper published following the 2006 general election, Clarkson (2006) attempts to show "that ineffective and indecisive leadership, combined with the continued pressure of external events" like the Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities,

commonly referred to as the Gomery Inquiry,<sup>112</sup> “served to render the Liberals vulnerable to a credible alternative” (Pammett & Dornan, 2006, p. 9).

On election night 2006, the Liberals saw their seat count reduced from 135 seats in the 2004 election to 103 and their total vote decline by seven percentage points (LeDuc, 2007, p. 719). While this result was perhaps a better result than they might have expected given the state of the party and the mood of the country, it ended 12 years of LPC dominance in Canadian federal politics. After the results were in on election night, Martin announced he would step down as leader of his party, which triggered a wide-open race to choose his successor. As was the case in 1957 and 1979, Liberals would be focused on rebuilding their party and renewing their leadership.

On February 6, 2006, Bill Graham was appointed interim leader of the LPC and took over as leader of the official opposition. Shortly after the Harper government was sworn in, Graham warned that the Liberals would not prop up the minority Conservative government if it meant compromising their values on key issues such as child care and income tax cuts and hinted that it may be up to the Bloc and the NDP to ensure passage of the government’s throne speech. On this issue, Campbell Clark of *The Globe and Mail* filed the following story:

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<sup>112</sup> Presided by the Honourable John H. Gomery, a judge of the Quebec Superior Court, this inquiry was set up by the Government of Canada in early 2004 to examine past sponsorship and advertizing activities.

Opposition Leader Bill Graham said he will not be afraid to defeat Prime Minister Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government, even though the Liberal Party will spend much of the year in a leadership race. Mr. Harper must either accommodate Liberal positions on key issues such as child care and income-tax cuts or turn to the New Democratic Party and Bloc Quebecois for support in the House of Commons, Mr. Graham said in an interview with *The Globe and Mail*. He placed the onus for avoiding a quick election on the New Democrats and the Bloc, saying they triggered the last election out of political opportunism. "We're not in the business of propping up the government," he said. "We're the Official Opposition. And that is our role, and we will stick to our points where they are important to the future of the country. "Other parties will have to decide whether they want to compromise on this, because they're the ones – the Canadian public very well knows – that put us in this position. They're the ones that created the Harper government. They're the ones that are going to have to accommodate it." (February 16, 2006)

A few days later, Liberal House leader, Ralph Goodale (Wascana) repeated his party's position that the Conservatives should not count on them to prop up the government (Curry, 2006a).

It should be noted that the tone adopted by the LPC following the 2006 general election differs somewhat from the tone adopted by defeated parties and opposition party leaders in our other three case studies of 1957, 1963, and 1979. As we have seen, the tone and mood is usually one of goodwill and cooperation. How can we explain the Liberal position? Perhaps, Liberals were heartened by survey findings that seemed to suggest that people voted for the Conservatives "to give the Liberals a time out" and by extension, in the words of Pammett and Dornan (2006) "just waiting for the right moment to put them back in power" (p. 22). Perhaps, like 1979, many Liberals were secretly hoping that Harper's government would only serve as a

warm-up act for the next Liberal leader. According to Hébert (2007, p. 15), this fear was shared by some Conservative supporters.

### *The New Democratic Party*

At first glance, the party least likely to support the Conservatives' agenda was the NDP given the clear policy divide and the lack of cooperation historically between these two parties.

The 2006 general election represented a victory of sorts for the NDP, the third and smallest opposition party in the House. While it did not hold the balance of power, it did manage to win 29 seats (10 more than in the 2004 general election) and 17.5% of the popular vote. This represented its strongest parliamentary representation since 1988.

After only three years at the helm of the party, Jack Layton, a former university professor, long-time Toronto city councilor, and former president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, was firmly in control of his party and receiving positive reviews for his achievements and for those of his party. For example, he had managed to double his party's seat count and its popular vote in two general elections.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, as pointed out by Whitehorn (2006), under his leadership

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<sup>113</sup> In the 2000 general election, the party had won 13 seats and 8.5% of the popular vote.

the party saw its membership and income rise – “crucial developments for a fourth-place party” (p. 93). Finally, it should be noted that during the previous Parliament Layton and the NDP had raised their profiles and generally received positive assessments for their role in making that minority Parliament work (Whitehorn, 2006, p. 94). Layton had managed to exact legislative and budgetary concessions from the Martin Liberals as a price for keeping them in power.<sup>114</sup>

On this latter point, as we have seen in previous chapters, cooperation between the Liberals and the NDP is not unusual, as the two parties are relatively close in terms of policy space. Furthermore, these two parties have a long history of working together on issues of common interest. This is not the case between the left-leaning NDP and the right-leaning Conservatives. In fact, Tom Flanagan (2010), a former close advisor to Harper and a Conservative campaign manager, has argued that while the Conservatives and NDP can sometimes agree on specific legislation, “their world views are too far apart for continuing co-operation” (p. A.21).

That said, there were some interesting developments between the 2006 vote and the opening of Parliament that would give reason for pause. For one, Layton was the first opposition leader to get a face-to-face meeting with Harper, before the leader of the official opposition and before Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe. Also, Layton

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<sup>114</sup> In April 2005, the Liberals had agreed to commit another \$4.6 billion for such social programs as affordable housing, post-secondary education, pension protection, the environment, and foreign aid in exchange for NDP support.

and Harper met a second time, while Graham and Duceppe only got one face-to-face meeting. According to *The National Post*, a spokesperson from the Prime Minister's office was unable to say why Harper met with Layton twice (De Souza, 2006). While Layton was discreet on the contents of his discussions with Harper, he was critical of the Liberal position, which he described as simply opposing everything. He also said that the NDP wanted to get things done when Parliament re-opened and that his party intended to "oppose where appropriate and propose solutions on key issues" (De Souza, 2006). While this was far from a ringing endorsement of the Conservative agenda, it did suggest some openness to work with the new government on common priorities, as, for example, on government accountability issues.

### *The Bloc Québécois*

Since its sudden arrival in 1993, the demise of the Bloc has often been predicted (LeDuc, 2009, p. 328), especially by political observers in English Canada (Cross, 2009). However, the results of the 2006 general election allowed the Bloc under leader Duceppe to reaffirm its dominance of Quebec electoral politics at the federal level. Despite suffering a net loss of three seats (from 54 in 2004 to 51 in 2006) and a drop in popular support in the Province of Quebec (from 49% in 2004 to 42% in 2006), the Bloc's popularity and electoral appeal remain strong.

However, the 2006 general election did represent a major setback for a leader who had confidently predicted that his party would increase its standing to about 60 seats and claim more than 50% of the popular vote, showing clear support for sovereignty. (Campbell & Schoffield, 2006). Duceppe's over-confidence leading up to the 2006 vote was probably based on a number of assumptions, some faulty, as highlighted by Pammett and Dornan (2006):

The federal Liberals were discredited, and furthermore, the provincial Liberal government was extremely unpopular. The Conservatives, sporting a Western leader and a reputation for hostility to any special status for French Canada, were not considered a threat. The NDP, for which Quebec voters might have some ideological affinity, had little organization in the province and was not competitive anywhere. (p. 10)

Instead, the Conservatives won 10 seats in the province and finished second in dozens of ridings, marking a major shift in the province's federal voting patterns (Curry, 2006a).

Given these unexpected turn of events, the opposition party that appeared to represent the best hope for cooperation for the Conservatives was the Bloc. This was not due to a shared ideology, but rather, a common purpose: wooing Quebec voters with appealing policies. The Bloc tends to represent the social democratic side of the political spectrum. Technically speaking, this would put them at odds with the right-leaning Conservatives. However, the party has no particular unifying ideology apart from promoting Quebec sovereignty. Rather, the Bloc's guiding principle, as often repeated by its leader, is to support policies that are good for

Quebec, and, implicitly, to better position it to eventually achieve the ultimate goal: sovereignty.

In this context, the Bloc was encouraged by the Conservatives' promise to respect provincial rights and adopt a more flexible approach to federalism ("open federalism"), address the "fiscal imbalance"<sup>115</sup>, and give Quebec a stronger voice on the international stage. On a political level, the Bloc also wanted to shore up its support by demonstrating to Quebeckers that they could get things done in Ottawa. For their part, the Conservatives were encouraged by the election results and saw much room to grow. Many Conservatives believed that the road to a majority "ran through Quebec ridings outside of Montreal" (Ellis & Woolstencroft, 2009, p. 35).

Shortly after the election, the Bloc announced that it intended to keep the Conservative minority government in office for a "good while", encouraged by their openness toward Quebec. In an interview, as reported by *The Globe and Mail*, Bloc House leader Michel Gauthier (Roberval–Lac-Saint-Jean) said that his party had no intention of imposing unrealistic demands on the government and was simply happy to see an end to "Liberal centralization" and encouraged by a Conservative pledge to respect the constitutional division of powers.

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<sup>115</sup> "Fiscal imbalance" is a term used to describe the monetary imbalance that exists between the federal and provincial governments. The argument put forward by some provincial governments and some political parties is that the money is in Ottawa while the needs are in the provinces.

“We don’t want useless battles. We want to help the government function for a while. I have no shame in saying I will be urging my colleagues...to conduct ourselves in a way that the government stays in place for a good while to do what needs to be done. [The Conservatives] have already shown more openness than the Liberals. The Liberals were centralist in everything they did, trying to infringe on the responsibilities of Quebec. It couldn’t be worse than that. I think the Conservatives will be more respectful of Quebec’s responsibilities.” (as cited in Curry, 2006a)

In conclusion, Gauthier stated that the Bloc would not spearhead any specific policies in exchange for its support. Rather, repeating the Bloc main theme, it would support policies that are good for Quebec.

### *Summary*

Our preliminary post-election analysis reveals that the Conservatives were not necessarily in a strong bargaining position. With a weak minority position (31 seats short of a majority) and the absence of a natural ideological partner, the Conservatives would appear to be rather isolated. However, there were some signs that could leave one to believe that the situation was not as bleak as it suggested. The Conservatives only needed the support of one of the three opposition parties to survive confidence votes and see its legislative agenda through and two of them had adopted a rather conciliatory tone vis-à-vis the new government. Secondly, the official opposition was leaderless, in disarray, and preoccupied with leadership. As was the case in 1957 and, despite the events of 1979, it was believed, rightly or wrongly, that the Conservatives could govern without fear of defeat as long as the Liberals were leaderless (Hébert, 2007, p. 14). Thirdly, after two general elections

in two years and an unusually long winter campaign, there was a sense that election fatigue was setting in amongst the parties. No party was keen on fighting another election soon. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, the Bloc had signaled its willingness to support the government.

In the early spring 2006, just prior to the opening of Parliament, many questions remained unanswered. Would the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament resemble the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament (Chapter 4) where the PC government of John Diefenbaker springboarded to a majority after only nine months in office? Or, would it resemble the 31<sup>st</sup> Parliament (Chapter 5) where the PC government of Clark maladroitly created a crisis with its first budget and was defeated after only nine months in office? Or, would the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament resemble the 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament (Chapter 6) and provide Canadians with a relatively stable and productive government? Or, indeed, would a completely different and new scenario play itself out? The answers to these questions lie in part on how Harper's Conservatives managed to control the legislative agenda. How would they approach confidence tests? How would they negotiate House business? Would they make the necessary compromises to secure the support of other parties? Would other institutional features come into play? The following section will attempt to answer these questions.

## **II      Agenda Control**

Assessing a government's control of the agenda is key to understanding its ability to successfully fulfill its viability and effectiveness requirements. Agenda control is largely a function of organizing House business (i.e., parliamentary calendar, government bills) and confidence tests (i.e., SFT, budget, other matters of confidence). The capacity to control the agenda is influenced by a number of institutional features and many of these were not present or were not sufficiently institutionalized in the 1950s and 1960s during Diefenbaker and Pearson's minority governments or played out less due to the short duration of the government, as was the case for the Clark minority government. These more recent institutional features include the new rules surrounding standing committees of the House, PMB, and legislation setting the date of the next general election. In this section, given the length and timing of Harper (1), these institutional features impacted on the government's ability to control the agenda, and, therefore, will be examined where appropriate.

Due to the relatively long tenure of Harper's first minority government, this section has been divided into two sub-sections. For each of the two parliamentary sessions of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament, we will examine the events surrounding the SFT, budget(s), legislative program, and other House business. In conclusion, at the end of this section, we will provide an overall summary and assessment of these two sessions in order to argue that Harper (1) did not have strong control of the agenda and that

this was due to his approach of using tactical strategies of confrontation, intimidation, and manipulation rather than the traditional majority building strategies that have been discussed in previous chapters.

First Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
April 3, 2006 to September 14, 2007

The first session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament lasted 117 House sitting days. During this period, the government introduced one SFT, two budgets, and a total of 63 government bills in the House. The first session ended on September 14, 2007, when Harper asked the governor general to prorogue Parliament.

*Speech from the Throne*

The Conservative government's first SFT was read by the governor general in the Red Chamber on April 4, 2006, and it laid out the government's agenda for the first parliamentary session. According to Russell (2008), the Conservatives felt no pressure to negotiate its contents with the opposition parties (p. 46). This was probably due to the fact it was a relatively short speech – just under 2,400 words – that largely reflected the same five campaign promises that the Conservatives had campaigned on during the 2006 general election. These included: a 2-point cut to the Goods and Services Tax (GST), from 7% to 5%; a federal accountability act; an anti-crime package; a \$100 / month family tax credit for child care; and, negotiations

with the provinces to develop a “waiting times guarantee” in the health care system.<sup>116</sup>

Consistent with past debates on SFTs, the opposition party leaders took the opportunity during the debate on Address in Reply to remark on their party’s approach to this minority Parliament and on the government’s proposed agenda. Overall, the SFT was well-received by all opposition parties. Not surprisingly, the biggest criticism was that the speech was short on detail.

For his part, the leader of the official opposition, adopted a much more conciliatory tone vis-à-vis the government than the one he had taken earlier at the time of his appointment and at the government’s swearing in. Graham stated:

I can assure all members of the House that our party will work with all parties in the House to make it work for Canadians in an atmosphere that is appropriate to our responsibilities. We will not seek to be partisan when it is not in the interest of Canada and Canadians. We will cooperate with the government to enable it to do the work it has been charged to do by the Canadian people. We will cooperate with the other opposition parties as well so that both in the House and in committee business will be conducted to improve government and legislation for the benefit of all Canadians.

We will seek to oppose in the most constructive way possible and we have no intention of seeking to frustrate by obstruction tactics that all too frequently marked the last Parliament. We will, of course, oppose but where appropriate and we will propose constructive alternative solutions as well.

As I said in my introduction, we recognize that we were elected to oppose government measures that are not in the interest of Canadians

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<sup>116</sup> For more details, see LeDuc, 2007, p. 718; Plamondon, 2009, p. 424; and, Wells, 2006, p. 210.

and that do not reflect the will they expressed in the last election in voting for a minority government. We will exercise that responsibility as opposition to the best of our abilities. (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 35)

He then followed to put forward an innocuous amendment, to be added to the main motion, which read:

and, while this House acknowledges the broader agenda mentioned en passant in the Speech, it particularly looks forward to early and meaningful action on such promises as those respecting aboriginal Canadians, new immigrants, greater security for seniors, improvements in the environment, and increased supports for farm families; and, given the strong economic and fiscal situation which the Government inherited, this House sees no reason for tax increases or a decrease in anticipated early learning and child cares spaces in Canada. (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 35)

Encouraged by the Harper Conservatives' promises to Quebec, Bloc leader Duceppe was much more unequivocal in his support for the government. In his reply to the SFT, he announced that the Bloc would vote in favour of the SFT, thereby guaranteeing its passage. He reiterated his party's long-standing position: "We will support the initiatives of this government that achieve progress for Quebec. We will do this because we are firmly convinced that anything that achieves progress for Quebec brings us closer to sovereignty" (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 43). He also said: "It does not matter to us whether a proposal comes from the government, the Liberals or the NDP. If it is in the interest of the people of Quebec, we will support it. If it is contrary to their interests, we will oppose it. That is how we have always acted" (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 45).

Duceppe finished his speech by introducing the following amendment to the Liberal amendment: “That the amendment be amended by adding after the words “tax increases” the following: for the lack of strategy to help older workers who lose their jobs, a strategy that should include income support measures” (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 45).

Finally, during his reply to the SFT, the leader of the NDP took the opportunity to remind members of the House the historical role played by his party in past minority Parliaments.

I remind members of the House that some of our greatest achievements are the result of minority parliaments, minority parliaments in which the government of the day worked with New Democrats to make a difference in the lives of ordinary Canadians. Canada's flag, old age pensions, public health care and a social program that was the envy of the world were all created in minority parliaments of the past. (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 48)

With regard to the content of the SFT, Layton was “cautiously optimistic” but expressed some disappointment to the fact that many issues deemed important to him and his party were missing, issues such as “poverty of first nations, employment insurance reform, investments in our cities and communities, funding for post-secondary education and skills training, a strategy for the north, and legislation to prevent floor-crossing while holding office” (*Debates*, April 5, 2006, p. 48).

In the end, the motion to adopt the SFT, as amended by the opposition parties, was unanimously agreed to by the House without division. This level of agreement at the beginning of a parliamentary session was reminiscent of the level of agreement that existed in a previous Parliament almost 50 years ago: the 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament or Diefenbaker (1). Would this level of cooperation continue? The government's next big test came when it presented its first budget.

*First Conservative budget – May 2, 2006*

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty introduced the Conservatives first budget titled *Focusing on Priorities* on May 2, 2006. Amongst other measures, it included a one-point reduction to the GST, income tax cuts, and targeted tax measures to help Canadians with the cost of tools, textbooks, transit passes, and children's sports. Other federal spending measures included: \$3.7 billion over two years for the new \$1,200 Universal Child Care Benefit; \$1.5 billion for agriculture; \$1.4 billion for policing, border security and public safety; and, \$1.1 billion over two years for the Armed Forces. The budget also specifically committed \$3 billion per year to pay down the federal debt.<sup>117</sup>

Literally minutes after Finance Minister Flaherty concluded his budget speech Duceppe announced that his party would support the budget, thereby ensuring its

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<sup>117</sup> The following information was taken from the Department of Finance Canada's website:  
<http://www.fin.gc.ca>

passage (Russell, 2008, p. 48). The Bloc gave its support not because its members agreed with all of its contents or even with its overall direction, but rather because it promised to address the fiscal imbalance. Bloc finance critic, Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe–Bagot) made that point clear when he stated:

The Conservatives must know that we would have rejected this budget had it not been for their formal commitment to solving the fiscal imbalance, with a specific timetable for a meeting of first ministers to discuss it and find solutions, and a specific timetable for the solution, that is, the next budget, in the spring of 2007. (*Debates*, May 3, 2006, p. 857)

The Bloc's pledge to support the budget allowed the Liberals and the NDP to oppose it on the grounds that it did not sufficiently address their priorities without risking an election. Subsequently, the Liberals and NDP introduced amendments<sup>118</sup> condemning the government, which were easily defeated.<sup>119</sup>

Due to an apparent scheduling mix-up, the budget implementation bill for the Conservative's first budget passed through the House without opposition. On June 6, 2006, as reported by the CBC, no one stood to speak when the budget bill came up or its third and final reading, so it was passed with unanimous consent and no recorded vote.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> For the wording of the Liberal amendment, see *Debates*, May 3, 2006, p. 855 and for the NDP sub-amendment, see *Debates*, May 3, 2006, p. 863.

<sup>119</sup> See Appendix N for a record of the key votes that occurred during the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

<sup>120</sup> See CBC News on-line, June 6, 2006: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

At this time, the LPC was fully engaged in a race to replace Paul Martin who had stepped down as leader of the party after the 2006 general election. Given that there was no clear and obvious choice for his replacement within the Liberal caucus, a wide-open contest ensued, which included at one point as many as 11 candidates. In the end, on December 2, 2006, the party members chose former Chrétien and Martin cabinet minister Stéphane Dion to lead them.<sup>121</sup>

Dion's victory came as a bit of a surprise. Despite his ministerial experience, Dion was not as well-known or as highly regarded nationally as his two principal rivals for the leadership, Michael Ignatieff and Bob Rae. Moreover, Dion did not have strong caucus support going into the convention. Dion was fluent but not particularly articulate in English and, in addition, was unpopular in many Quebec circles because of his strong stand against the Quebec independence movement during the Chrétien years (LeDuc, 2009, p. 326).

Dion entered the House as the new leader of the official opposition when the House returned from its Christmas recess on January 29, 2007. The first true test of the new dynamics in the House came when the Conservatives brought down their second budget a few weeks later.

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<sup>121</sup> Dion won the leadership on the fourth ballot of the convention, defeating the initial front runner for the leadership, Michael Ignatieff, and the former Premier of Ontario, Bob Rae.

## *Second Conservative budget – March 19, 2007*

On March 19, 2007, Flaherty introduced his second budget titled *Aspire to a Stronger, Safer, Better Canada*. The five central themes included environment and health, tax relief, fiscal balance, security, and capital markets. The main measures contained in this budget included: \$39 billion in additional funding over seven years for the provinces and territories to help them better provide services and improve their infrastructure; a new \$2,000-per-child tax credit; \$9.2 billion for debt reduction; \$550 million per year for the Working Income Tax Benefit and \$140 million over two years to establish a Registered Disability Savings Plan; rebates on fuel-efficient vehicles and efficient alternative fuel vehicles, an incentive to get older polluting cars off the road and a Green Levy on fuel-inefficient vehicles; \$400 million for Canada Health Infoway to support the development of electronic health records and up to \$612 million to support jurisdictions that have made commitments to implement patient wait time guarantees; and, \$60 million to help veterans and their families deal with stress injuries related to their military service.<sup>122</sup>

With regard to the reaction of the opposition parties to this budget and its subsequent passage, a scenario identical to the Conservatives' first budget played itself out. Almost immediately, the Bloc said it would support the budget while the Liberals and NDP attacked it "for not going far enough in their direction" (Russell, 2008, p. 53). Once again, the Bloc's support ensured the budget's passage,

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<sup>122</sup> The following information was taken from the Department of Finance Canada's website:  
<http://www.fin.gc.ca>

thereby allowing the Liberals and NDP to oppose it without risking a general election.

The main reason the Bloc supported this budget was because it included steps to address the fiscal imbalance, most notably it increased transfers to the provinces, “with Quebec getting 40% of the new transfers in the first year” (Russell, 2007, p. 52). During debate on the budget, Duceppe candidly stated: “If we are supporting the budget, it is because there is \$3.2 billion on the table” (*Debates*, March 20, 2007, p. 7634). He was also quick to point out that this money did not resolve the issue and more had to be done for Quebec in terms of repairing the fiscal imbalance (Brennan, 2007).

A more partisan political element to the Conservatives’ second budget, with its emphasis on transfer payments to the provinces, notably to the Province of Quebec, is the link to the provincial election in Quebec that was to be held on March 26, 2007, one week after the federal budget was tabled in the House. The Conservatives decision to “resolve” the fiscal imbalance was seen less as a policy concession to the Bloc to ensure its support for the budget, but more as a strategy to boost their own support amongst the Quebec electorate by demonstrating how lucrative federalism could be for Quebec. As noted by *The National Post*:

The “fiscal balance” on offer in yesterday’s budget helps the provinces to varying degrees, but it is Quebec that put the issue on the national radar, and it was to Quebecers that Prime Minister Stephen Harper first

promised to resolve the problem. "We will work to eliminate the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces," Mr. Harper declared in a 2005 election speech credited with triggering his party's Quebec breakthrough in the last federal election. (Hamilton, 2007)

In addition to adopting measures to address the fiscal imbalance, the Harper government took other non-budgetary steps leading up to the 2007 budget to bolster its electoral support in Quebec. Once again, these measures were not necessarily aimed at placating the Bloc, but rather part of a wider "outreach strategy of attracting more support from Quebecers" (Ellis & Woolstencroft, 2009, p. 26). They included establishing a formal role for Quebec in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and supporting a motion in the House recognizing the "Québécois" as a nation within a united Canada.

As for the other opposition parties, despite the fact that the budget was described by one journalist as "a budget with almost literally something for everyone – seniors, stay-at-home spouses, suburban commuters looking for an excuse to buy that new ultra-green road machine" (Sheppard, 2007) and by another columnist as anything but conservative and "a budget so Liberal, the Grits should sue" (Ibbitson, 2007), the Liberals did not support it. Newly minted Liberal leader Dion criticised the government for not responding adequately to the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing Canada. As reported by *The Toronto Star*:

Liberal leader Stéphane Dion also lost little time putting the boots to the budget, which he claims is raising income tax instead of giving Canadians a break. "I cannot support his budget. This budget is raising income tax

by 16.5 per cent. It is \$1.4 billion that should have been back in the pocket of the people," he said. "The middle class, health care, students, child care, almost nothing." Dion said that while the Conservatives have restored \$5 billion of environmental program cuts, "they have no plan." "There is nothing to make sure that polluters pay. This is very, very troubling for me," said Dion. The Liberal leader wants Canada to live up to the international commitment under the Kyoto protocol to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. The Liberal leader called the increase in transfers to the provinces "the main smear of this budget" because it only slightly raises what they were to get under a Liberal government package. (Brennan, 2007)

As for the NDP, despite the fact that the budget's emphasis was on new social expenditures to assist working families and seniors, and on increasing transfers to provinces, it condemned the government "for increasing the prosperity gap between very wealthy and ordinary working families by continuing the previous government's obsession with corporate tax reductions and failing to address the increasing costs that working families face every day" (*Debates*, March 20, 2006, p. 7637) and proceeded to vote against it.

The Liberal and NDP amendments<sup>123</sup>, which condemned the government's budgetary policy, were easily defeated, as the Bloc voted with the government.

While the Bloc's support ensured the passage of the Conservatives' SFT and budgets, this was not necessarily the case with the government's legislative initiatives, as we will see in the following sub-sections.

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<sup>123</sup> For the wording of the Liberal amendment, see *Debates*, March 20, 2007, p. 7631 and for the NDP sub-amendment, see *Debates*, May 20, 2007, p. 7637.

## *Legislative Program*

As stated in the introduction to this section, during the first session, the government introduced a total of 63 government bills in the House. Of these, 36 received Royal Assent.<sup>124</sup> In this sub-section, we will focus on four legislative issues that illustrate clearly the interparty dynamics that dominated the first session. These issues were also chosen because they are important in terms of events that occurred during the second session and lead to the dissolution of Parliament. These four issues include government accountability, the government's crime agenda, setting a fixed election date, and the environment.

Billing themselves as "Canada's New Government", the Conservatives introduced Bill C-2, *An Act providing for conflict of interest rules, restrictions on election financing and measures respecting administrative transparency, oversight and accountability*, as their "symbolic first piece of signature legislation" (Ellis & Woolstencroft, 2009, p. 31). The bill's short title, *The Federal Accountability Act* (FAA), is the name under which it became known as part of the Conservatives' platform in January 2006 election campaign.<sup>125</sup> Accountability was one of the key themes of the 2006 election campaign and all five major political parties made accountability-related campaign commitments. As highlighted in the bill's legislative summary prepared by the Library of Parliament (December 18, 2006),

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<sup>124</sup> See Annex O for a list of the government bills passed by Harper (1).

<sup>125</sup> The following information originates from the legislative summary prepared by the Library of Parliament. See LEGISinfo at <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Accountability was one of the key themes of the 2006 election campaign, having increasingly captured the attention of the Canadian public in recent years as a result of a series of controversies over the management of government programs and their costs. The November 2003 report of the Auditor General (tabled in February 2004), which identified issues raised by the Sponsorship Program, and the release of the reports of the Gomery Commission in November 2005 and February 2006, played an important role in identifying accountability processes and the information needed to make them effective as a central focus for reform initiatives. (p. 70)

During the spring/summer/winter of 2006, passing the FAA was the government's number one priority. After lengthy committee hearings, the adoption of significant amendments, some proposed by the government and others by opposition parties, and, at times, acrimonious debate, the massive omnibus bill received Royal Assent on December 12, 2006, after eight months of it being introduced in the House. While all opposition parties worked with the government to improve the bill, NDP MP Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre), who sat on the legislative committee that studied the bill, was often singled out as the opposition member "who worked alongside the government in most cases to get the bill through the committee as quickly as possible" (Vongdouangchanh & Doyle, 2006).

Another Conservative priority and 2006 election campaign promise was to "tackle crime". As stated in its SFT, the government pledged to "propose changes to the *Criminal Code* to provide tougher sentences for violent and repeat offenders, particularly those involved in weapons-related crimes. It will help prevent crime by

putting more police on the street and improving the security of our borders” (*Debates*, April 4, 2006, p. 8).

While the government was able to pass some of its crime legislation, bills such as the Conditional Sentencing Bill (C-9); the Street Racing Bill (C-19); and, the Proceeds of Crime and Terrorist Financing Act Bill (C-25), it was not able to pass the following key priority bills: the Minimum Sentences for Firearms Crimes Bill (C-10); the Age of Sexual Protection Bill (C-22); the Criminal Procedure Bill (C-23); the Repeat Offenders Bill (C-27); the Impaired Driving Bill (C-32); and, the Reverse Onus Bail Hearings Bill (C-35). C-27 and C-32 were still in the House at Committee and Report stages, respectively, when the House was prorogued. The other four, Bills C-10, C-22, C-23, and C-35 were being debated at Second reading in the Senate.

As we will see in the next sub-section, the government will re-introduce these bills (wholly or partly) in the second session. However, unhappy with the pace at which the Liberal majority in the Senate was studying the bills and increasingly frustrated by the opposition-controlled committees in the House, as well as with opposition attempts to amend the bills in both chambers, the government would adopt a different tactic in the second session to ensure their passage.

The third issue that merits some attention is the introduction of a new institutional feature that, until now, no government, minority or majority, had to contend with: fixed- date election legislation. As promised during the 2006 election campaign, the Harper government enacted legislation fixing the date of the next federal election on the third Monday in October, four years after the previous general election. Therefore, Bill C-16, *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act*, set the date of the next general election for October 19, 2009. The bill received Royal Assent and came into force on May 3, 2007.

When the bill was introduced in the House at First reading, Rob Nicholson, the Minister for Democratic Reform, stated in a press release:

Fixed election dates will improve the fairness of Canada's electoral system by eliminating the ability of governing parties to manipulate the timing of elections for partisan advantage. Currently, the Prime Minister is able to select a date for a general election and to advise the Governor General to dissolve Parliament. This allows the governing party to set the timing of a general election to its own advantage. Beyond providing for greater fairness, fixed election dates will improve transparency and predictability.<sup>126</sup>

However, during a speech in the House on September 16, 2006, the Minister was quick to point out that

...the prime minister's prerogative to advise the Governor General on the dissolution of Parliament is retained to allow him or her to advise dissolution in the event of a loss of confidence. Moreover, the bill states explicitly that the powers of the Governor General remain unchanged,

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<sup>126</sup> <http://www.democraticreform.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&Page=news-comm&Sub=news-comm&Doc=20060530-eng.htm>

including the power to dissolve Parliament at the Governor General's discretion. (*Debates*, September 18, 2006, p. 1215)

While parliamentary experts debated the merits of such legislation, most observers noted how rare it was for a government to propose an institutional measure that apparently did not seem to benefit itself in one way or another, but actually checked its power (Massicotte & Levy, 2008, p. 14). The full impact and limitations of this legislation will be better understood in the second session.

Finally, an issue that is worthy of mention, but was not singled out by the government as a priority at the beginning of the session, is the environmental file. To illustrate the point that this issue had not loomed large on the Conservative agenda, Hébert (2007), reveals that:

Harper had originally considered starting off his mandate on that front with an absentee minister from the House of Commons. In an early Cabinet plan, Michael Fortier, the prime minister's Senate appointee, would have taken the portfolio with him to the upper house – where he would have been largely sheltered from daily opposition attacks over the Kyoto Protocol. (pp. 122-123)

In the end, Harper named an inexperienced and untested MP from Alberta, Rona Ambrose (Edmonton–Spruce Grove), to the post, an appointment described by Hébert (2007) as “an afterthought” (p. 122).

While in opposition, Conservatives had opposed the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas reduction. As pointed out by Ellis and Woolstencroft (2009), “[Harper] began his term as prime minister by clearly indicating that his government would essentially ignore Canada’s Kyoto obligations, primarily but not exclusively because inaction by the previous Liberal government had made keeping its commitments impossible” (p. 31). Instead of focusing on greenhouse gas reduction, Harper focused much more on particulate matter (e.g., ozone, sulphur dioxide, nitric oxide, gaseous ammonia, mercury) and pollution and attempted to frame the environment as a health, transportation, and natural resources issue. On October 19, 2006, the government tabled in the House Bill C-30, *An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the Energy Efficiency Act and the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act* (Canada's Clean Air Act). This bill sought to reduce the health and environmental risks associated with air pollutants, “with only vague promises of long-term action on carbon dioxide” (Ellis & Woolstencroft, 2009, p. 32).

By agreement, Bill C-30 was referred to a special legislative committee before the second-reading stage. Under the rules of parliamentary procedure, this meant that the bill had not been approved in substance by the House and that the committee had “greater latitude in amending the bill than would otherwise have been the case” (Beauregard-Tellier, 2007, p. 2). The end result was that a united opposition of Liberal, Bloc, and NDP members, who outnumbered the government members on the committee, essentially rewrote the bill “to emphasize action to fulfill Canada’s international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” (Beauregard-Tellier,

2007, p. 2). As noted in the legislative summary prepared by the Library of Parliament, “Indeed, the changes made to the bill were so extensive that it has been described as being ‘virtually unrecognizable from its original form’” (Beauregard-Tellier, 2007, p. 20).

The committee tabled its report revamping the bill in the House on March 30, 2007. While the government hinted at the possibility of a confidence vote on the Clean Air Act, the bill was never put on the Order Paper for debate at Report stage and Second reading, despite the fact that the House passed an opposition motion (151 to 121) on May 29, 2007, calling on the government to do just that.<sup>127</sup> Eventually the bill died on the Order Paper when the first session was prorogued in September of the same year (Vongdouangchanh, 2007a).

Parallel to these happenings, a Liberal backbencher by the name of Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré–Mercier) had introduced a private member’s bill in the House in May 2006 titled *An Act to ensure Canada meets its global climate change obligations under the Kyoto Protocol* (C-288). The purpose of the bill, as stipulated in the its first reading version, was “to ensure that Canada takes effective and timely action to meet its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol and help address the problem of global climate change” (see paragraph titled “Summary”).<sup>128</sup> Also, the

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<sup>127</sup> See Vote No. 190 (Parliament of Canada website: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>)

<sup>128</sup> First Reading version of Bill C-288:  
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Docid=2493088&file=4>

bill stipulated that the government had to prepare a climate change plan within 60 days after the bill came into force. With the support of the Bloc and NDP the bill received Royal Assent on June 22, 2007: a fairly rare occurrence for a private member's bill. According to Massicotte and Levy (2008), the government "dismissed the bill saying there were no consequences or penalties if the conditions of the bill were not followed" (p. 17).

By early 2007, in response to these events and the public's growing concern over global warming, Harper had declared the environment a government priority and "jumped on board the greenhouse gas bandwagon" (Ellis & Woolstencroft, 2009, p. 33). Moreover, on January 4, 2007, Harper replaced his embattled rookie Environment Minister, who was widely viewed as doing a poor job selling the government's Clean Air Act and named a seasoned politician to the post, John Baird, MP for the riding of Ottawa West – Nepean.<sup>129</sup>

Having abandoned Bill C-30 and having already dismissed the Liberal private member's bill C-288, the new minister announced on April 26, 2007, a new federal environmental action plan, named *Turning the Corner: An Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gases and Air Pollution*. The new plan included short-term regulatory, not legislative, measures to reduce emissions from cars and trucks; increase the range of energy efficient products; and, improve the air we breathe indoors. (Press

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<sup>129</sup> See CBC News on-line, January 4, 2007: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

Release, April 26, 2007)<sup>130</sup> By introducing regulatory measures as opposed to legislative changes, the government did not have to seek the approval of the House. The government's plan received accolades from industry, but failing grades from environmentalists and opposition parties (Vongdouangchanh, 2007b).

### *Other House Business*

As we have mentioned earlier, in minority Parliaments, opposition party members outnumber government members on the standing committees of the House. For the government, this represents some significant challenges with regard to advancing its legislative agenda and, particularly, to controlling the issues to be discussed and studied in this forum. With the government's Clean Air Act (Bill C-30), we saw just how complicated the new activity of the House committees makes the capacity to control the agenda and, in specific cases, how tenuous the government control became. During the first session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament there were many more examples of this dynamic playing itself out, where the government was forced to go in directions it preferred not to go.

It did not take long for life in committees to become tense and acrimonious. As opposition leader during Martin's minority government in the 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament, Harper had led, in Peter H. Russell's words "a backbench rebellion that forced Prime

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<sup>130</sup> <http://www.ec.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=714D9AAE-1&news=4F2292E9-3EFF-48D3-A7E4-CEFA05D70C21>

Minister Martin to allow committees to choose their chairs by secret ballot” (Russell, 2008, p. 49). Now, as prime minister, instead of allowing a free vote to elect committee chairs, Harper decided that he would pre-select a Conservative MP to chair those committees chaired by a government member.<sup>131</sup> This reversal was clearly seen as a tactic by the Prime Minister and his office to better control committees and their work (Curry, 2006b).

Once the committees got up and running, Harper suffered a stinging and public rebuke when a House committee rejected his choice to lead the new Public Appointments Commission. The Public Appointments Commission was a major part of the Conservatives’ accountability program and was supposed to make the process of appointing people to major government jobs more transparent.<sup>132</sup> On May 16, 2006, in a 6-5 vote, opposition members of the committee asked Harper to withdraw the name of former energy executive Gwyn Morgan because of concerns over his views on immigration and his ties to the Canadian Alliance (Delacourt, 2006). Instead of working with the opposition to find a “consensus” candidate, Harper refused to put another nominee forward until his party had a majority of seats in the House, thus effectively killing the commission (Russell, 2008, p. 49).

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<sup>131</sup> There were 24 committees in the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Nineteen were chaired by a government member and 5 by an opposition Liberal member. There were also two joint House/Senate committees chaired by a government member (Vongdouangchanh and Abbas Rana, 2006).

<sup>132</sup> See CBC News on-line, May 16, 2006: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

This episode showed just how difficult and challenging trying to move the government's agenda forward in committees would be. It also shed some light into the government's overall approach to committees. Instead of reaching out to opposition parties and seeking consensus, the Harper government adopted a confrontational and adversarial approach.

On May 18, 2007, *The National Post* reported on a 200-page guidebook for Conservative committee Chairs on how to fulfill their duties. Columnist Don Martin, who broke the story when he received a leaked copy, reported that the document "tells them how to favour government agendas, select party-friendly witness, coach favourable testimony, set in motion debate-obstructing delays and, if necessary, storm out of meetings to grind parliamentary business to a halt". In the same article, D. Martin also reported that the manual "paints in vivid detail what Conservative chairs should say when confronted by challenges to their authority, how to rule opposition MPs out of order during procedural wrangling and even tells government MPs how to debate at committee when a hostile motion is put to a vote". To his mind, the document illustrated a government preference for manipulative tactics and "suggest[ed] committee leaders have been whipped into partisan instruments of policy control and agents of the Prime Minister's Office" (D. Martin, 2007, p. A.1).

For his part, the Chief Government Whip Jay Hill (Prince George–Peace River) described the guidebook as "an internal Conservative party document" and refused

opposition parties' demands to make the guidebook public. Moreover, rejecting opposition and media portrayal of the document as an "obstruction manual" or a "dirty-tricks manual", Hill insisted that "there's nothing sinister in there" (Vongdouangchanh, 2007c).

It was basically just to compile all of the standing orders, all of the authority that the chairs have into one readily accessible document that they could avail themselves as reminders of the power of the chair. This is nothing different. It's always been that way, regardless of who the government is. These are tactics. The whole business of filibustering has been used by government and opposition since Parliament started in 1867 as a way to delay activities they're opposed to. There's various different tactics that are available not just to the chairs, but committee members of various parties that they can utilize to try to delay where necessary, or where they feel is necessary. (p. 1)

While the real purpose of the manual was debatable, some of its tactics were clearly being used by Conservative committee chairs to delay or derail the committee's work. Here are but three examples as reported by *The Hill Times*:

- At the International Trade Committee, Conservative MP Leon Benoit (Vegreville – Wainwright) walked out of a meeting after the committee overruled his ruling that the witness's testimony was out of order.
- The government members on the House Access to Information, Ethics and Privacy Committee filibustered for five hours before testimony on why parts of the Afghan prisoner detainee report were blacked out could begin.
- Liberal MPs tried to make a point of privilege about the Citizenship and Immigration Committee because witnesses received a letter from Citizenship and Immigration Minister Diane Finley (Haldimand - Norfolk) detailing instructions on how to conduct themselves. Opposition charged she was trying to "muzzle" the witnesses. Finley defended the letter, saying "This was an attempt to ensure the well-running of the committee and the well-being of my departmental officials." (Vongdouangchanh, 2007c, p. 1)

Another example often cited to highlight the state of committees occurred at the Standing Committee on Official Languages. When the opposition parties wanted to hold committee hearings on the implications of the government's decision to cancel the court challenges program for minority language groups, the Conservative committee Chair, Guy Lauzon (Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry) closed the committee down. In reaction to this unilateral move by the chair, the opposition members passed a motion of non-confidence, which carried by a vote of 7-4. When the clerk attempted to elect a new chair from the government side as required by the rules, each of the four Conservative members on the committee was nominated and declined in order to prevent the committee from doing its work. After lengthy negotiations between parties, Conservative MP Steven Blaney (Lévis–Bellechasse) was finally elected chair (Massicotte & Levy, 2008, p. 20).

All of these examples occurred towards the latter part of the first session. Needless to say the mood in Parliament was antagonistic and bitter and the speculation of an impending election was high heading into the second session. In early September 2007, Harper asked the governor general to prorogue Parliament, thus putting an end to the first session. Harper maintained that his government had “delivered on all the major commitments” that the Conservatives had made during the 2006 election campaign and that “Now it’s time to launch the next phase of our

mandate.”<sup>133</sup> Twenty-seven government bills in the House died on the Order Paper.<sup>134</sup>

Second Session, 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
October 16, 2007 to September 7, 2008

The second session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament lasted 175 House sitting days and was characterized by an even greater use of the tactical strategies that had dominated the first session. During this period, the government introduced one SFT, one budget, and a total of 62 government bills in the House. The second session ended when the prime minister asked the governor general to prorogue Parliament and call a general election.

As was the case with the first session, this sub-section examines the events surrounding the SFT, budget, the government’s legislative program, and other House business relevant to determining Harper’s agenda control.

*Speech from the Throne*

The Conservative government’s second SFT was delivered by the governor general on October 16, 2007. Like in its first SFT, the government announced five priorities

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<sup>133</sup> See CBC News on-line, October 30, 2007:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

<sup>134</sup> See Annex P for a list of the government bills that died on the Order Paper during the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

that it intended to focus on during the next session. They included: “strengthening Canada’s sovereignty and place in the world; building a stronger federation; providing effective economic leadership; continue to tackle crime; and improving our environment” (*Debates*, October 16, 2007, pp. 3-7). For each priority, the 16-page, 39-minute speech included specific policy and legislative measures the government intended to introduce. Without elaborating on each one, the issues that provoked the most debate during the subsequent debate on the Address in Reply included the future of the military mission in Afghanistan (i.e., possible extension to 2011); the introduction of legislation to place formal limits on the use of the federal spending power for new shared-cost programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction; the implementation of broad tax cuts; the continuation of the government’s “tough-on-crime” agenda; and, the government’s *de facto* abandonment of the Kyoto Protocol – the international greenhouse gas reduction treaty, to which Canada is a signatory member.<sup>135</sup> The SFT also announced the government’s intention to reintroduce certain bills that had died on the order paper when Parliament was prorogued.

The SFT, which was described by one political historian as an “election manifesto” (see Laghi, 2007), set up a dramatic confrontation in the House. The NDP and the Bloc immediately signaled their opposition to the speech, leaving it to Liberals to decide the fate of the Conservative government. If the Liberals decide to oppose it as well, the government would fall, sending voters back to the polls for the third time

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<sup>135</sup> See CBC News on-line, October 16, 2007:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

in just over three years. In essence, the Liberals were forced to decide between supporting the agenda and forcing a snap election.

The atmosphere in Ottawa was politically charged with election speculation. What would Dion do? Dion was aware that if he were to back down, critics could paint this as an act of cowardice and some would question his mettle as a leader. It should be noted that the Conservatives had been running a series of televised attack ads against Dion since he became leader of the LPC in December 2006. The negative ad campaign, which carried the tag line “Stéphane Dion is not a leader”, included an unflattering portrayal of Dion as a weak and ineffectual leader (LeDuc, 2009, p. 326). These ads were the first use of attack ads during a non-electoral period in Canada.

What compounded matters for Dion was that Harper, along with his new agenda, had signaled a curious change in his position on parliamentary votes: if the opposition was going to pass the SFT, they would also have to pass the laws that flow from it. He warned the opposition parties that they could not allow the SFT to pass and then obstruct his government’s core priorities. In other words, if the SFT passed, Harper would expect support for the main elements of the speech when they come forward as legislation. Otherwise, he would consider making those items

matters of confidence on which the government could fall.<sup>136</sup> As concluded by Russell (2008), “There was to be no more compromising or negotiating with opposition parties. On every issue, it would be Harper’s way or no way; defeat on any issue would be treated as a non-confidence vote” (p. 57).

How can one explain this change in tone and the adoption of this new strategy? An article written by Tom Flanagan,<sup>137</sup> which appeared in *The Globe and Mail* a few months earlier in August 2007, provides some insight into this question. In an article titled “It’s time for Conservative minority brinksmanship”, Flanagan stated:

But with C-16 [fixed election dates] in place, the government may have to resort to different tactics, declaring high-priority bills to be matters of confidence and daring the opposition to defeat them.

So far, this government has attached confidence only to budgetary bills, following the example of recent Liberal minority governments, such as Mr. Trudeau’s in 1972-74 and Mr. Martin’s in 2004-05. That is, indeed, the most sensible strategy when your main concern is survival.

However, the Conservatives have shown their staying power, and are well prepared for an election. In contrast, none of the three opposition parties seems to want an election. The Liberals have saddled themselves with an unimpressive leader, have not yet mastered modern fundraising techniques and are organizationally unprepared for the campaign trail. The New Democrats are fighting for space with the Greens. The Bloc Québécois was lucky to have lost just three seats in 2006 and must fear further losses whenever the next writ is dropped, now that the Conservatives have become competitive in francophone Quebec.

Surviving for 18 months has been an impressive achievement for the Conservatives, but mere survival will become increasingly less rewarding unless it is matched by legislative achievement. No government can survive politically if it acquires a reputation for weakness,

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<sup>136</sup> See CBC News on-line, October 16, 2007:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

<sup>137</sup> As previously mentioned, Tom Flanagan was a former close advisor to Harper and Conservative campaign manager.

and that is the risk the Conservatives face if they remain tied up in Parliament.

By using confidence measures more aggressively, the Conservatives can benefit politically. If the opposition parties retreat, the government gets its legislation. If the opposition unites on a matter of confidence, the Conservatives get an election for which they are best prepared.

“Fortune is a woman,” Machiavelli wrote in a now politically incorrect aphorism, “and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force.” It is time for the government to take advantage of its advantages. (Flanagan, 2007b, p. A.15)

During his speech in response to the SFT, Dion stated: “The meager Speech from the Throne delivered yesterday is so vague, so full of holes and raises so many concerns that it warrants little praise” (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 31). While he did highlight some of the positive elements contained in the speech and praised the government for their inclusion, he proceeded to rhyme off all of his parties’ grievances with the government’s proposed agenda. In particular, Dion was critical of the government’s environmental protection measures. The environment was a top priority for Dion, who had served as Minister of the Environment from 2005 to 2006 in Martin’s government. He had consistently called on the Conservative government to reaffirm Canada’s commitment to the Kyoto Protocol’s targets for cutting greenhouse gases. Given the government’s position on the accord, supporting the SFT would be difficult for Dion.

Despite his criticisms and misgivings, Dion stated that the SFT had “to be assessed in light of the fact that Canadians do not want another election right now. They want

Parliament to do its job” (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 32). Therefore, he concluded his speech by announcing:

The official opposition certainly remains very critical of the throne speech but never before has a federal government fallen on the basis of a throne speech.

Canadians can count on the official opposition to do everything it can to make this Parliament work. To that end, we will propose amendments and we will not make the government fall on its throne speech, which would cause a third general election in four years, something Canadians have already shown they do not want.

The amendments we are putting forward would enable us to support the throne speech. If they are rejected, we will do as the NDP when it decided on October 16, 2006 to abstain on the vote on the softwood lumber agreement in order to avoid causing an election. (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 36)

The Liberals then proceeded to introduce a lengthy amendment that read:

That the motion be amended by adding the following:

and this House calls upon the government to recognize that any shortfall in meeting our 2010 Kyoto commitments would be a result of their decision to kill the previous government’s innovative Project Green plan, followed by 18 months of inaction, and the government must replace its weak approach with real action to create the momentum required for Canada to catch-up in the second phase of Kyoto;

to announce now that the Canadian combat mission in Kandahar will end in February 2009 in order to facilitate a replacement, and begin discussions with NATO and the Government of Afghanistan on what non-combat role Canada can play afterwards to aid in the reconstruction of Afghanistan;

to end 18 months of inaction in the fight against poverty in Canada by building on the good work of the previous Liberal government that funded such initiatives as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, affordable housing, literacy, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiatives (SCPI) and the Working Income Tax Benefit; and

to stop taking for granted the unprecedented strong economy and fiscal success inherited by this government from its predecessor and bring forward proposals to reduce corporate taxes and other measures that will improve the economy of Canada, especially in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, and lessen the impact of the government's egregious mistakes on income trusts and interest deductibility. (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 36)

This amendment was designed for rejection by the government and the other opposition parties, in particular the NDP. The New Democrats had been calling for an immediate withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan; they opposed corporate tax cuts; and, would certainly not support a motion heaping praise on the previous Liberal government.

Harper's immediate reaction was to mock Dion: "As I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, it reminded me a little of the professor who goes through your term paper, marks all over it everything he disagrees with and then passes us anyway" (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 38). This tact was reminiscent of another leader of a Conservative minority government some 50 years ago who was eager to go to the polls but could not get the opposition parties to vote non-confidence. In 1957, Diefenbaker had said of the opposition Liberals then: "They talk like lions, they will vote as lambs" (*Debates*, November 19, 1957, p. 1300).

As previously mentioned, the Bloc signaled its intention to vote down the SFT. During debate on the Address in Reply, Duceppe stated:

The elimination of the federal spending power, the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan in February 2009, the implementation of the Kyoto protocol, fully maintaining the supply management system and supporting those regions affected by a major forestry crisis are the five main priorities of the Quebec nation.

With its Speech from the Throne, the government has clearly shown that it rejects Quebeckers' priorities. Consequently, the Bloc Québécois rejects this throne speech. (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 46)

Consequently, Duceppe moved the following amendment:

That the amendment be amended in paragraph 1 by replacing the words "of their decision to kill the previous government's innovative Project Green plan, followed by 18 months of inaction," with the following: "of the inaction of the Liberal and Conservative governments", and

by replacing paragraphs 3 and 4 with the following: "to put forward tangible measures to help the workers, businesses and regions affected by the crisis in the forestry and manufacturing sectors", and

"to eliminate the federal spending power in areas that fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces by ensuring the right to opt out with full financial compensation and with no strings attached from any federal program that encroaches on the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 48)

As for Layton, the leader of the NDP, who had also signaled his opposition to the SFT, he summed-up his party's position by stating "we believe that the government is taking this country in the wrong direction, and the agenda laid out in this throne speech continues to take Canada down the wrong path...and therefore cannot be supported" (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 49).

In the end, only Liberals supported the Liberal amendment and only Bloc members supported the Bloc sub-amendment, thus both were easily defeated. On the main

government motion seeking approval for the SFT, the Bloc and the NDP voted against while Liberals abstained from voting (not a single Liberal voted). As a result, the motion passed 126 to 79. Was this the beginning of a new voting pattern?

A few weeks later, the same pattern did reproduce itself. On October 30, 2007, the government introduced its Economic Statement, which called for, amongst other measures, \$60 billion in personal and corporate tax cuts over the next five years and a further cut in the GST to 5%, effective Jan. 1, 2008.<sup>138</sup>

On a ways and means confidence motion attached to the economic statement, Liberals once again abstained from voting while the Bloc and NDP voted against. The motion passed by a margin of 127 to 76.

This set the stage for the government's third budget in February 2008. According to Ellis and Woolstencroft (2009),

...by the time Flaherty presented his 2008 budget, something Conservative strategists believed an election would have prevented, the cupboard was bare. Flaherty announced that revenue would shrink for the first time since 2001, primarily as a result of the government's tax measures and, the slowing U.S. economy. Surpluses would be the smallest in a decade because, despite the drop in revenue, the government would increase program spending by a further \$7 billion. Clearly the Conservatives had reached the limits of "good news"

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<sup>138</sup> See CBC News on-line, October 30, 2007:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>. For more details visit the Department of Finance Canada's website: <http://www.fin.gc.ca>

provisions in their fiscal program, making any new expensive campaign platform proposals untenable. (p. 30)

*Third Conservative budget – February 26, 2008*

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty delivered the government's third budget on February 26, 2008, one that was short on big spending pledges but which he called "prudent" in the face of a possibly slowing economy.<sup>139</sup>

Building on the government's 2007 Economic Statement, the main themes as laid out in the Minister's budget speech titled "Responsible Leadership for Uncertain Times" included: taxes on individuals, tax-free savings account, seniors and Northern residents, investing in Canadian business, helping Canada's communities, focusing on core responsibilities. Amongst many others, the government announced measures to continue to reduce the national debt; create a new tax-free savings account; invest in the automotive sector; reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the safety systems for food, consumer and health products. The government also promised more money for students (*Debates*, February 26, 2008, pp. 3337-3342).

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<sup>139</sup> See CBC News on-line, February 26, 2008:  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

One *Toronto Star* columnist wrote that “yesterday's budget will likely go down as one of the least memorable in recent federal history. It tries awfully hard not to be a landmark document and largely succeeds” (Hébert, 2008).

Despite describing the budget as “a grab bag that does nothing” and “a budget that is one mile wide and one inch deep, a budget that touches about everything and accomplishes very little” (as cited in O'Neill & Mayeda, 2008), Dion announced just half an hour after the budget's release that his party would not vote against it, thus ensuring it would pass. Dion told reporters in the foyer of the House of Commons, “Under the circumstances, I don't see enough in this budget that would justify that we precipitate an election that Canadians do not want for now” (as cited in O'Neill & Mayeda, 2008).

Once again, Harper taunted Dion, saying if the Liberal leader does not like the Conservative budget, he should vote against it and force an election. “I want to talk about leadership, vision and credibility. Let me just say to the leader of the opposition, when he comes and makes ferocious attacks on a budget that he has every intention of allowing to pass he simply has no credibility in those attacks” (*Debates*, February 27, 2008, p. 3349).

The LPC's position was reiterated in the House by Liberal finance critic John McCallum (Markham–Unionville) during the debate on the budget:

We in the Liberal Party do not think this is a good budget. Nor do we think it is an egregiously bad budget. Therefore, we do not propose to bring down the government on this budget and to cause an election at this time, which in our view, Canadians would not see as justified by a big expenditure over such a little budget. (*Debates*, February 27, 2008, p. 3362)

Given their position, the Liberals introduced the following amendment worded in such a way to ensure that no other party would support it:

That this House recognizes that this Budget contains some initiatives that attempt to mirror sound and intelligent Liberal policy proposals, but regrets that the government has made significant economic policy mistakes over the past two years and shown an NDP-like lack of fiscal prudence that prevent it from dealing with a downturn in the Canadian economy. (*Debates*, February 27, 2008, p. 3362)

For his part, after listening to the Minister of Finance deliver his speech in the House, Duceppe said that he was willing to hit the election trail to campaign against a budget that, in his party's view, does nothing for the struggling manufacturing and forestry sectors in Quebec. The budget also did not satisfy the Bloc's demands for more public spending in a variety of areas, including seniors and social housing (O'Neill & Mayeda, 2008).

Consequently, the Bloc introduced the following sub-amendment:

That all the words after the word "contains" be replaced by the following:

initiatives that do not meet the expectations of Quebeckers who have asked that the current year's surpluses be used to help workers and

industries in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, which are facing a serious crisis in Quebec, to help seniors living below the poverty line and help individuals improve the energy efficiency of their homes, calls on the government to implement these measures before the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2008, and deplores that this Budget ignores the fiscal imbalance by not transferring \$3.5 billion to Quebec and the province for post-secondary education and by not eliminating federal spending power. (*Debates*, February 27, 2008, p. 3366)

As for the NDP's reaction to the budget, Layton concluded that this was a budget that profited corporations and failed the working families of Canada (O'Neill & Mayeda, 2008). NDP finance critic Thomas Mulcair (Outremont) summed-up his party's position by stating: "when we see a budget that has nothing on health, housing and families and gives everything to big corporations, we know exactly what to do: we will stand and vote against it" (*Debates*, February 27, 2008, p. 3369). Mulcair and other NDP members went on to chastise the Liberals for not doing the same.

Once again only Bloc members supported their party's sub-amendment, while only seven Liberals symbolically supported the Liberal amendment. On the main motion seeking approval for the government's budgetary policy as announced in the 2008 budget, the Bloc and NDP voted against along with only 11 Liberals, thus ensuring its passage by a vote of 125 for to 90 against.

During the first session, the government was able to survive confidence votes attached to its SFT and budgets due to the support of the Bloc. In the second

session, the Bloc having withdrawn that support, the government managed to pass its SFT and budget due to the Liberals, who, while critical of the government's policies and overall direction, abstained from voting against the government out of fear of triggering an election. Did this dynamic continue to play itself out with regard to the government's legislative program? Was Harper better able to control committees, PMBs, and other House business in this session than the first? In the following pages, we will attempt to provide some answers to these questions.

### *Legislative Program*

As previously mentioned, during the second session, the government introduced 62 government bills in the House. Of these, only 29 received Royal Assent. Conversely, 33 died on the Order Paper when the session was prorogued after 175 sitting days. In this sub-section, we will focus on one particular government bill that illustrates well the tactics adopted by the Harper government to try to pass its legislative agenda.

As previously discussed, the government's first bill to start off the first session was the Accountability Act. In the second session, the lead-off bill was a comprehensive justice reform bill. Bill C-2, *The Tackling Violent Crime Act*, was composed of the key elements of five criminal law bills introduced during the first session of the 39th Parliament but never passed: C-10, Minimum Sentences for Firearms Crimes Bill;

C-22, Age of Sexual Protection Bill; C-27, Repeat Offenders Bill; C-32, Impaired Driving Bill; C-35, Reverse Onus Bail Hearings Bill. Instead of tabling a motion to revive the bills at the stages they were at when Parliament was prorogued,<sup>140</sup> the government decided to bundle them in one massive omnibus bill. Instead of working with the opposition parties to address their concerns in an effort to arrive at a consensus based on traditional majority building strategies, the Harper government adopted a tactical strategy of exploiting the vulnerabilities of a weakened opposition to strong-arm Parliament into supporting its omnibus crime bill (Vongdouangchanh, 2007d).

During the Address in Reply debate Harper had announced that the government's first bill would be a matter of confidence because "the time for talk has passed and the time for action has long since arrived" (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 43). He had also stated:

There is no good reason for the official opposition to oppose or to delay Bill C-2. In fact, the official opposition campaigned in favour of virtually all of these initiatives in the last election and has had enough days, weeks and months, and in some cases over a year, to delay their passage. That is why we are making the tackling violent crime act a manner of confidence. We will be seeking timely passage of this legislation and, as is the case with confidence measures, the government will not accept amendments to the substance of these initiatives. (*Debates*, October 17, 2007, p. 44)

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<sup>140</sup> Parliamentary rules allow for government bills to be reinstated with a majority vote.

The opposition parties were critical of the government's tactics and argued that its mega crime bill flouted Parliament. Moreover, they contended that Bill C-2 was a means for the government to defeat itself and go to the polls (Vongdouangchanh, 2007d). That said no party wanted to appear "weak" on crime. Therefore, Bill C-2 passed third reading on November 28, 2007, and was sent to the Senate the following day, just over one month after it was introduced in the House on October 18, 2007.

Given the success of its tactics in the House, the Harper government proceeded to try to intimidate the Senate to ensure Bill C-2's swift approval. As highlighted by Massicotte and Levy (2008), since forming the government, the Conservatives complained about the time the Liberal dominated Senate was taking to adopt their bills and that frustration reached its peak on February 6, 2008. On this day, the Justice Minister, Rob Nicholson, appeared before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee studying Bill C-2. In his opening remarks to the committee members, the Minister gave them an ultimatum: "pass the Bill by February 28 or else" (Massicotte & Levy, 2008, p. 16). Nicholson stated: "If the Senate cannot or will not pass this bill by the end of February, I don't believe I would have any choice but to advise the prime minister that this is a confidence measure and I will put the matter in his hands" (as cited in Foot, 2008).

As pointed out by Massicotte and Levy (2008), “the Senate is not a confidence chamber” and “the defeat of a bill by the Senate does not bring down the government” (p. 16). However, a few days later, the government introduced in the House a motion that read:

That, given the Government has declared the passage of Bill C-2, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*, as a matter of confidence, and, that the bill has already been at the Senate longer than all stages took in the House of Commons, and that all aspects of this bill have already been the subject of extensive committee hearings in Parliament, and that in the opinion of this House, the Senate majority is not providing appropriate priority to the passage of Bill C-2, a message be sent to the Senate calling on the Senate to pass Bill C-2, the Tackling Violent Crime Act, by March 1, 2008. (*Debates*, February 11, 2008, p. 2862)

According to Massicotte and Levy (2008), this motion in the House combined with the announcement in the Senate committee “amounted to one House invoking closure on another” (p. 16) and “completely undermines the essence of bicameralism and the intentions of the founders to create an independent Chamber of sober second thought” (p. 17). For his part, constitutional expert Errol Mendes commented on the unprecedented nature of such a confidence motion involving the unelected Senate (Laghi & Taber, 2008). Despite these protestations and those of the Liberals, the motion was adopted by a large majority (172 to 27) as the Liberals abstained once again (*Debates*, February 12, 2008, pp. 2967-2968).

In the end, the Senate did return the bill before the government’s deadline and it received Royal Assent on February 28, 2008.

While the government was able to achieve its goal of passing this priority bill, which was the cornerstone of its crime agenda during the second session, it was not as successful at passing its complete legislative program. In fact, as previously stated, more than half of the bills it introduced died on the Order Paper.

### *Other House Business*

The 2008 sitting of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament was a particularly tumultuous period in terms of the business of the House. On the one hand, the government was appearing to do everything it could to provoke an election or, failing that, embarrass the opposition Liberals all the while attempting to keep a firm control on the agenda. On the other hand, the Liberals were doing everything in their power to avoid an election, but keep the government to account in hopes of taking over the agenda. The result was a series of confrontations and retreats. For the most part, the governing Conservatives were doing the confronting and the opposition Liberals were doing the retreating. In addition to the confidence motions already discussed respecting the SFT, the budget, and the government's crime agenda, there are a few more notable showdowns that occurred in the House and in committee that merit our attention. These examples illustrate well this interparty dynamic that marked the second session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

First, in the House, on March 13, 2008, the government managed to pass a motion to extend Canada's military mission in Afghanistan until February 2011 with the support of Liberals. Harper's handling of this issue is often cited as an example of his fine tactical skills. As described by Ellis and Woostencroft (2009):

After playing both sides of the issue to flush the Liberals out, he [Harper] defused the issue by asking for recommendations from an independent advisory panel he had created with former Liberal deputy prime minister John Manley as its chair. When the panel reported back much of what Harper wanted to hear, he again forced the Liberals to either support his agenda or bring down the government over the issue. (p. 34)

Just a few days earlier, the government had staved off another confidence vote when the Liberals refused to bring down the government over its alleged failure to combat climate change. On March 10, 2008, the House voted on an NDP motion, which read:

That the House regrets this government's failure to live up to Canada's international climate change agreements, and its refusal to bring forward for debate and vote, the Clean Air and Climate Act, the climate change plan called for by a majority vote of the House, and that therefore the House no longer has confidence in this government. (*Debates*, March 10, 2008, p. 3785)

The motion was easily defeated by a margin of 121 to 84, as only 11 Liberals joined the NDP and Bloc members and voted for the motion.<sup>141</sup> As opined by *The Globe and Mail* on March 11, 2008, "the NDP motion was intended to paint Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion, a former environment minister who had styled himself as a climate-change champion, into an uncomfortable corner" (Editorial: "Election Averted").

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<sup>141</sup> See Vote No. 62: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

While Dion himself voted for the motion, the failure to bring down the government over an issue he claimed to champion contributed to the perception that he was a either a hypocrite, a weak leader, or both. As noted by Ellis and Woolstencroft (2009),

On the one hand, Dion accused the government of being both ideologically right-wing and profligate. On the other, he repeatedly claimed that the continued existence of the government was fundamentally detrimental to Canada, but time after time ordered his caucus to abstain from votes on the very policies he was strenuously opposing. His repeated threats to defeat the government, but not actually doing so, granted the NDP and Bloc carte blanche to back up their rhetoric with votes against the government, further reinforcing the “Dion is not a leader” tag. (p. 30)

Overall, the Liberal strategy of opposing but not defeating was taking its toll not only on Dion’s credibility but also on his overall polling numbers, which in turn increased the Conservatives’ desire for an election all the more (Plamondon, 2009, p. 442).

However, before actually heading into an election, the Conservatives were cognizant of the fact that they needed to neutralize two potentially damaging stories: 1- the actions of the CPC during the 2006 election (i.e., alleged illegitimate election campaign expenses) and 2- allegations that Chuck Cadman, a former Independent MP (now deceased), had been offered financial inducements by the Conservatives in exchange for his support during a confidence vote to bring down the Martin government in May of 2005 (38<sup>th</sup> Parliament). How the Harper government handled these two issues, particularly in the House committees that wished to investigate,

and, outside of Parliament, via the courts, speaks to the strategies adopted by the Harper government to ensure overall control of the agenda of the House.

In both these cases, the House committees that attempted to investigate these issues were stymied by the government members on the committee. In fact, the committee members used the same tactics they had resorted to in the first session: Conservative chairs ruled motions out of order, they refused to recognize appeals, and when that failed, Conservative members simply walked out. To say the least, business in these committees was chaotic and quickly reached impasses that, in most cases, were never solved.<sup>142</sup>

Whenever Harper could not outmanoeuvre or control his opponents in the parliamentary arena (or his perceived opponents, as in the case of Elections Canada), he sought to intimidate them with legal action via the courts (Ellis & Woolstencroft, 2009, p. 20). The CPC took Elections Canada to court after it ruled that some Conservative candidates had broken election financing laws in 2006 (Wiseman, 2008) and, in an unprecedented move, Harper himself sued Dion and the Liberals over allegations that he had attempted to bribe Cadman (Galloway, 2008).

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<sup>142</sup> For more details, see Massicotte and Levy, 2008, pp. 20-21.

Finally, with regard to PMB, in the first session, we cited the example of Bill C-288, a Liberal-sponsored private members' bill on the environment that received Royal Assent but was dismissed and ignored by the government because it did not agree with the intent of the bill. In the second session, there is yet another example that illustrates how the Harper government dealt with PMB and ensured that it was able to find ways to avoid having to go in directions contrary to its will.

Private members' bill C-253 was also a Liberal-sponsored bill. It sought to amend the *Income Tax Act* to provide that contributions to a Registered Education Savings Plan be deductible from a taxpayer's taxable income. The government opposed this measure on the grounds that it would be too costly and would risk putting the country into deficit. Despite the fact that all Conservatives voted against the bill, it was passed at Third reading in the House by a vote of 156 to 122 and sent to the Senate. In order to prevent this bill from becoming law, the Conservatives adopted an unusual course of action. As described by Massicotte and Levy (2008):

Eight days later the government managed, through a very unusual motion, to retroactively stop the bill after it had already passed the House. They did this by introducing a ways and means motion into a completely different bill (C-50 the Budget implementation bill) which specified that the government would not fund C-253. When the motion came to a vote the Liberals opted to abstain so as not to force an election. Meanwhile the decapitated bill continued to be debated in the Senate until Parliament was dissolved. One can only speculate on the chaos that could follow if this practice is repeated on a regular basis. (p. 18)

By attaching a ways and means motion to an unrelated confidence bill (the Budget implementation bill), the government essentially made a vote on a opposition private

members' bill a confidence matter – knowing that the Liberals were not prepared to vote non-confidence – thus ensuring the bill's demise.

Given that the Conservatives were rather isolated from the three opposition parties and that they had adopted a strategy of intimidation to see their agenda through, they had to make creative use of the parliamentary rules and practices. These tactics used in the House coupled with those used in committees did nothing to ameliorate the already strained relationship between the government and opposition. When the House broke for its summer recess on June 21, 2008, many wondered how long this could continue.

### *Overall Summary and Assessment of the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament*

Given that Harper found himself presiding over one of the weakest minority governments in Canadian history (31 seats short of a majority), with no natural ideological ally, facing an opposition that is relatively close in terms of policy space, one would have expected his government to consult with the opposition parties often and extensively, seek consensus on issues, and accommodate and compromise whenever appropriate to ensure viability and effectiveness. In short, one would have expected the adoption of a wide-range of majority building strategies to survive confidence tests and successfully pass its legislative agenda. Instead, Harper (1) was characterized by confrontation, manipulation, and

intimidation, thereby revealing the significance of individual players in determining the actions and approach of a minority government in controlling the agenda.

At first blush, given its durability and the fact that it passed three budgets, two economic statements, and some of its key priority bills, one could have easily concluded that Harper (1), despite weak bargaining power, had a relatively high agenda control. However, a closer examination of the House business of Harper (1) reveals that its control of the agenda was much weaker than it first appeared.

First, the Harper government was able to pass only roughly 50% of its bills. In total, 60 bills died on the Order Paper during the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Second, Harper had to find creative ways to prevent the opposition parties from diluting his bills in committee or imposing their agenda in Parliament via motions introduced in the House or attached to PMB. For example, we saw that Harper ignored the will of the House at times and/or used unconventional tactics to impose his own. He also exploited procedural manipulations which, while permitted under current parliamentary rules, represent a break from tradition and herald a new strategic approach to controlling the legislative agenda and governing.

And yet, the Harper government found itself on the losing side of many votes in the House. In fact, in a recent article published in *Le Devoir*, Louis Massicotte (2008)

points out that the Harper government lost a total of 120 votes, nearly one third of all the recorded divisions in the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament – a Canadian record. By comparison, during the parliamentary life of our other three minority governments that we studied there were a combined total of 3 recorded votes in the House where the cabinet did not vote with the majority: none during Diefenbaker (1); 2 during Pearson (1), both were Speaker's rulings; and, one during Clark's government, which precipitated its fall (sub-amendment to the budget motion). These defeats speak to the challenge of minority governments to control the agenda in general and to the ideological divide separating the Harper government and the opposition parties in particular and its impact on the Harper government's relatively low agenda control. In summary, although the government managed to receive Royal Assent on certain bills in widely publicized strategic manoeuvres, its overall score of bills passed remains relatively low and reveals a less than impressive control of the overall legislative agenda.

Following the 2006 general election, there were some concerns that a Harper-led Conservative government would be too right-leaning for mainstream Canadians. However, as we saw, Harper once in power embraced what has been described by some as "incremental conservatism". Harper's budgets were markedly tame by conservative standards and his government's policies were mostly moderate and mainstream (Plamondon, 2009, pp. 452-454). As argued by Plamondon (2009), Harper governed mostly from the centre and not the far right.

To sustain his government after the election of 2006, he warmed to climate change and the environment. He overcame his distaste of

regional development programs. He neutralized the issue of Canadian participation in the war in Afghanistan by letting Parliament decide its fate. (p. 467)

However, what is open for debate is whether Harper's moderation in terms of his government's overall agenda was a response to the collective positioning and influence of the opposition parties or simply part of a wider strategy aimed at increasing his party's electoral fortunes in the next general election.

Notwithstanding these attempts at moderation, it is clear that there remained a wide gap between the course of action the Harper government wished to pursue and that of the opposition. This is evident upon examining the work of the standing committees of the House.

Traditionally, the work of committees has been less partisan and adversarial than that of the House. This was not the case in the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Committees were continuously marred by forced resignations and boycotts and often bogged down in procedural wrangling. As noted by Massicotte and Levy (2008), there was an enormous increase in the number of challenges to rulings by the chairs of standing committees compared to other Parliaments. They report that between September 1997 and September 2008, a period spanning four Parliaments, there have been 151 appeals. Of these, 120, or 79%, occurred during Harper (1). The authors conclude that "fifty of these rulings were overturned and in many cases an

overturned ruling meant a change of 180 degrees in the direction of the committee” (Massicotte & Levy, 2008, p. 21).

Things got so unruly that the Speaker of the House warned that “our committees are suffering from a dysfunctional virus that, if allowed to propagate unchecked, risks preventing members from fulfilling the mandate given them by their constituents” (*Debates*, March 14, 2008, p. 4183). He decried the “excessive partisanship” and “general lawlessness” that pushed parliamentary committees to the brink of anarchy (Bryden, 2008).

As for the principal actors, they blamed each other for the state of affairs. Whereas Harper complained about the “tyranny of the majority”, the opposition parties criticized his government for not respecting the “will of the majority” and by extension, the will of Parliament.

### **III      Dissolution: How Harper (1) Ended**

On September 7, 2008, after much speculation, Harper visited the governor general and asked her to call a general election for October 14, 2008. Like Pearson in 1965, Harper called an election to try to gain a majority. Like Pearson, Harper failed.

As we saw in the previous section, the Conservatives had been goading the opposition parties into defeating them on various issues which had been declared to be matters of confidence since the beginning of the second session. Each time the Liberals backed away, either abstaining or casting a few symbolic votes against the proposals. While this strategy provided for tense episodes of political brinksmanship and provoked many parliamentary crises, it never led to the defeat of the government. In the end, Harper decided to do what the opposition could not: put an end to the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament and triggered Canada's 40<sup>th</sup> general election.

This move came as a surprise to some because the Harper government, in the previous parliamentary session, had introduced and passed a fixed-date elections law that set the date of the next federal election for October 19, 2009. As Plamondon (2009) reminds us, before the law was passed, Harper had boasted that "Fixed election dates stop leaders from trying to manipulate the calendar simply for partisan political advantage" (p. 441-441). Yet, Harper's reasons for calling an election one year early were seen as just that.

Some have argued that he did it to prevent the opposition parties from controlling the destiny of his government by defeating it at a time of their choosing. "As Tory strategist and former Harper chief-of-staff Tom Flanagan observed of Harper, 'He doesn't like being at the mercy of others. He likes to be in control of what he's doing.'" (as cited in Plamondon, 2009, p. 442) Others have argued that Harper and

his advisers made the calculation that the conditions to expand their minority and perhaps achieve a majority were favourable: polls were generally favourable, Harper rated highly on leadership and competence, the left was deeply fractured, and, more importantly, he was facing a weak Liberal leader trying to defend a controversial carbon tax as part of a broader environmental plan called the Green Shift (Campion-Smith, 2009). In addition, there was a larger question of timing, where some have argued that the Harperites sensed that a window of opportunity was open but could soon close.

The negative turn in global economies meant that an election taking place a year or so later could well occur under highly adverse economic conditions – conditions for which governing parties are often blamed. The forthcoming American presidential election also meant that a change in the USA's administration might soon introduce an entirely new political dynamic. (LeDuc, 2009, p. 327)

To justify his actions, Harper declared that Parliament had become “dysfunctional” and conducted some perfunctory consultations with the three opposition leaders. Having concluded that there was too much resistance to his government's agenda, the time had come for his government to seek a fresh mandate and for the people of Canada “to choose the way forward” (CPC, Press Release, October 14, 2008). Most observers accused Harper of manufacturing a crisis and violating the spirit of his own law on fixed election dates.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> See the following two editorial comments: “Manufacturing a crisis”, in *The Globe and Mail*, August 28, 2008, p. A12 and “PM's political games”, in *The Toronto Star*, August 28, 2008, p. AA6; and, the following opinion piece: Errol P. Mendes, “Harper is in a fix”, in *The Ottawa Citizen*, August 28, 2008, p. A15.

Once all the votes were counted on October 14, 2008, Harper could only sustain another minority government. The CPC won 143 seats, a net improvement of 19 over its 2006 showing but still 12 short of an overall majority. The Conservatives win was achieved on 37% of the total vote, a gain of only one percentage point over 2006 (LeDuc, 2009, p. 328).

For the Liberals, the election results were truly disastrous. Winning only 77 seats, the party suffered a net loss of 26 seats from its already poor 2006 result. The 26% of the popular vote was the lowest percentage that the party had ever achieved (LeDuc, 2009, p. 328). One week after the election, Dion announced his resignation, saying he would stay on as leader only until a new leader was chosen.

As for the minor parties, they fared better. The NDP won 37 seats, a gain of eight seats from 2006 and the Bloc won 49 seats, a loss of only two from 2006.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we applied our theoretical framework to Harper's first minority government (2006 - 2008). Our analysis reveals that the defining characteristic of this minority government was not its use of majority building strategies, but rather the absence of their use. As we saw, Harper (1)'s bargaining power was rather

weak and his agenda control was relatively low. On the one hand, it found itself in a weak minority position (31 seats short of a majority) and rather isolated due to ideological and historical factors. On the other hand, it needed the support of only one other opposition party to survive confidence tests and pass its legislative agenda. While Harper's Conservative government lasted relatively long, it was unable to pass the majority of its bills.

During the first session, the Bloc supported the government during most crucial confidence votes (they supported the government's SFT and their two budgets). The Liberals and NDP opposed. The government did not make any policy concessions to the Bloc per se in exchange for its support; rather, it pursued policies in hopes of making electoral in-roads in the Province of Quebec in the next general election, such as adopting measures to address the fiscal imbalance, giving Quebec a formal voice in UNESCO and recognizing the "Québécois" as a nation. Despite the arrival of a new Liberal leader in January 2007 mid-way through the first session, the dynamics of the House did not change, not until the beginning of the second session.

At the start of the second session, the Bloc withdrew its support and the government announced that, henceforth, legislative measures related to its core priorities would also be considered matters of confidence. Given that Dion and his party were unprepared to fight an election, unable to counter Conservative attack ads, and

down in the polls, the Liberals ensured the government's survival throughout the second session through their abstention on key votes. For their part, Conservatives were keen on fighting an election but were constrained by their own election law. As noted recently by a senior political commentator, "history shows that minority governments that want to be defeated, because they see a majority in their grasp, act and govern as though they already have a majority. That is what leads to the defeat they seek" (D. Newman, 2010).

As we also saw, the Conservatives adopted various tactics, some controversial, in attempts to control the agenda. On the legislative front, they managed to pass some of their key priority bills. However, instead of making concessions to accommodate opposition concerns, they preferred to withdraw bills/motions or "beat" the opposition into submission with the threat of an election. Their clear effort to govern from the centre and adopt pro-Quebec policies was seen more as a means of boosting their electoral support than of securing the legislative support of the opposition parties.

What have we learned from the Harper government about our hypothesis on minority government in Canada? What lessons can be drawn from this minority experience?

First, Harper (1) highlights the important role individual actors play in influencing and ultimately determining the duration and legislative output of minority governments in Canada. For one, Harper's personality and leadership style very much defined the tone and tactics used by this government. While in the end his parliamentary strategy was not very effective in terms of passing government bills, it was successful at exposing the weakness of the official opposition, and, in particular, its leader. This parliamentary actor's role was key in ensuring the government's viability despite the fact that collectively, the opposition did not approve of the government's overall policy direction. Second, it demonstrates the importance of institutional factors. As we have seen, the evolution of some institutional features, most notably Standing committees and private members' business make it increasingly more difficult for minority governments to control the agenda. Third, Harper (1) made creative use of parliamentary norms, procedures, and conventions. Bundling bills, declaring confidence on non-budgetary items, attaching unrelated motions to confidence bills, ignoring the "will" of the House with regard to private members' bills and motions, obstructing the work of parliamentary committees, and, breaking, in spirit, at least, his government's own fixed-date election law were all tactics used in an attempt to control the agenda of the House, at times successfully, and, at others, not so successfully. All of these strategies allowed the government to block opposition interference in its legislative agenda but did not lead to its implementation. Fourth, Harper (1)'s low legislative output can be linked to the influence of Canada's party system. On a right/left ideological spectrum, the three opposition parties were closer in terms of policy space than the Conservatives,

leaving them isolated. Finally, once again, as was the case with previous minority governments, notably Diefenbaker (1) and Pearson (1), the allure of seeking a majority was strong and ultimately impacted on the government's duration.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

In this study we have examined the legislative politics of Canadian minority Parliaments. Based on three theoretical perspectives derived from the literature on Western European studies on coalition and minority governments and Canadian legislative studies on minority governments we determined that the exercise of majority building is strategic, institutionally conditioned, and shaped both by party politics and party systems. This allowed us to develop a framework from which to investigate the viability and effectiveness of minority governments at the federal level in Canada.<sup>144</sup>

It was our contention that building legislative majorities in minority situations in Canada is a function of two interrelated variables: bargaining power and agenda control. We posited that minority governments that enjoy strong bargaining power and high agenda control can more easily fulfill their viability and effectiveness requirements. Conversely, minority governments with weak bargaining power and low agenda control tend not to last long or pass much of their legislative agenda. Moreover, we postulated that in order to strengthen their bargaining power and agenda control, minority governments can offer up office-related and policy concessions to their political opponents in the House. How well they manage this

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<sup>144</sup> See Figure 3.1 on p. 68 for our majority building framework.

give-and-take relationship will also have a determining effect on their viability and effectiveness. To test this multilayered hypothesis we applied our framework to four minority governments which have occurred in the last 50 years or so: 1- Diefenbaker (1957-1958), 2- Pearson (1963-1965); 3- Clark (1979-1980); and, 4- Harper (2006-2008).

The purpose of this final chapter is to summarize the major findings of our inquiry and discuss their implications. In addition, we will highlight the methodological limitations of our approach and provide suggestions for further research.

## **I Summary of Major Findings**

Our study revealed that our four minority governments share many similarities, particularly Diefenbaker (1), Clark, and Harper (1). All three are Conservative governments that took office following a long period of time in opposition: 22 years in 1957, 16 years in 1979, and 13 years in 2006. Moreover, in all three cases, the leader of the official opposition (the out-going prime minister) announced his resignation shortly after the general election and a call went out for a Liberal convention to choose a new party leader.

Pearson (1) and Harper (1) also share some similarities. Both men leading these governments had fought elections as leader prior to their victories and both had lost (unlike Diefenbaker and Clark who had won their first general elections following

their election as leader of their respective parties). Also, both Pearson and Harper formed minority governments following a previous minority government headed by another political party and went on to preside over yet another minority government (Pearson from 1965 to 1968 and Harper since 2008 to the present).

Despite these similarities, what is most striking are the differences in their respective outcomes. Diefenbaker's government did not last for a long period but had high legislative output and went on to win one of the biggest majorities in Canadian history in a general election that he called. In contrast, Pearson's government lasted for a relatively long period and could be considered to have been very productive but never managed to secure a majority government in a general election. As for the Clark government, it ended abruptly with little to show for in terms of legislative successes and went down to electoral defeat after losing a vote of non-confidence in the House. Clark himself was ousted as party leader a few years later. Finally, by minority government standards, Harper (1) lasted for a relatively long period but had relatively low legislative output. In the end, Harper unsuccessfully attempted to secure a majority in a general election that he had called and, this, in spite of the fact that his government had enacted a fixed-date election law.

Though some elements need to be elucidated further, generally speaking, our hypothesis has been confirmed. First, our most successful government, Pearson (1) enjoyed both strong bargaining power and high agenda control. This

government showed itself to be rather adept at building legislative majorities to pass its legislative program and survive confidence votes. At the other end of the spectrum, the Clark government had both weak bargaining power and low agenda control. Further, we have argued that this unenviable position was in large part due to the government's behaviours. In other words, Clark (1) did not have to be so unsuccessful. Clark, his parliamentary team (most notably his House leader), and his team of advisors, through a series of miscalculations and strategic errors, played a long-term electoral strategy rather than a short-term legislative strategy, which led to their downfall. As for Diefenbaker (1), this minority government enjoyed both strong bargaining power and high agenda control due to a confluence of rather unique and favourable circumstances. According to our hypothesis, this government was in a strong position to last for a long period and see its legislation through. However, while this government did pass its legislation, its duration was short. As we saw, Diefenbaker seized an opportunity to secure a majority, dissolved Parliament and called a general election. Finally, our last government, Harper (1), was judged to have relatively weak bargaining power and a rather tenuous control of the agenda, due in large part to Harper's unconventional approach to minority government. Despite these two negatives, this government managed to survive many confidence votes, thereby extending its duration. This outcome would appear to contradict our stated hypothesis. However, Harper's aversion to reaching out to the opposition to build legislative majorities and the evolution of certain institutional features were cited as factors explaining his government's low output. As for its relatively long duration, our study showed that Harper was faced with a weak official

opposition, which was not prepared to vote non-confidence and fight an election. Moreover, Harper was constrained in calling an election on his own earlier in his mandate due to his government's commitment to passing legislation fixing the date of future general elections.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that when it comes to successfully fulfilling viability and effectiveness requirements not all minority governments perform equally. This can be explained by the relative strength of their 1- bargaining power, which is determined by the make-up of the House, interparty dynamics, and intra-party cohesion and 2- agenda control, which is determined by how parliamentary actors organize House business, deal with confidence tests, and approach other institutional features, in particular, standing committees.

With regard to the first variable, bargaining power, our study revealed that the role of individual actors and the state of the party system play a key role in determining its relative strength. With regard to the first point, the role of individual actors, our analysis stressed the importance of party leaders, and, in particular, the leaders of the governing party and the official opposition because of Canada's two-party dominance. The assessment these actors make of their respective situations and the courses of action they decide to adopt, whether to cooperate or confront, depends greatly on their personality and leadership styles.

Another key factor is the current state of the party system, in particular the presence or absence of ideological allies. The availability of one or more ideologically compatible parties tends to facilitate the exercise of majority building. As we saw, the identification of potential allies is not always apparent at first and that support can come from unlikely quarters due to non-ideological considerations, such as common objectives, fear of an election, or material concerns, such as party status. In addition, our study stressed the importance of intra-party cohesion in determining a party's bargaining power. We saw examples of party members working towards a common goal acting in unison solidly behind their leader. We also saw the effects of disunity within a party. Finally, though voting in Canada's House of Commons is very disciplined, we saw examples of individual party members voting against party lines.

As for the second variable, agenda control, our study highlighted the strategic importance of the calculations of individual actors and the influence of the institutional framework in which they operate in shaping their actions. In particular, we saw in two of our four case studies (Pearson and Clark) the important role played by House leaders in the day-to-day operations of the House and its impact on their particular government's viability and effectiveness. According to Pearson, in a minority context, "with the complexity and quantity of parliamentary business, the House Leader is one of the most important members of the Cabinet and should have no other ministerial responsibilities" (Munro & Inglis, 1975, p. 97).

In addition, we saw that setting the parliamentary calendar and legislative agenda can be powerful tools in ensuring agenda control. We saw the important role SFTs and budgets, including all the legislation that flow from these key documents, play in articulating and implementing a government's agenda. We saw that the evolution of certain institutional features, such as standing committees and private members' business, and the introduction of new institutional features (i.e., fixed-date elections) have made it increasingly more challenging for minority governments to control the agenda. We also saw that parliamentary norms with regard to calling general elections and conventional wisdom relating to leadership races were tested and impacted on the behaviours of parliamentary actors. Finally, we saw that the confidence convention and the power of dissolution can be powerful institutional levers for the government of the day.

As for the role of concessions, our study revealed that office-related and policy concessions can be effective survival tools when exchanged for opposition support on parliamentary votes. As we saw during Pearson (1), making concessions can go a long way in creating goodwill and building trust amongst parliamentary actors who tend to function in an adversarial environment. However, our study also revealed that the art of compromising and making concessions is not necessarily one that is mastered well enough or often enough by Canadian political actors.

This issue of creating goodwill and building trust amongst parliamentary actors speaks to a wider issue that strengthens the importance of the rational actor

perspective. While bargaining power and agenda control go a long way in explaining the duration and output of minority governments in Canada, we also found that the exercise of majority building is influenced heavily by factors that are not as easily defined or measured. These factors relate to the very essence of human relations. Politics is after all about people and how they interact with one and other. Our analysis highlighted the vital role of interpersonal relations and how they can impact on outcomes. For example, we cited the personal rapport between Pearson and Thompson, the leader of the Social Credit. The mutual respect they had for one and other created a lot of good will, which allowed them to work together to achieve common objectives. We also noted the positive role played by Government House Leader Pickersgill during Pearson's government. By all accounts Pickersgill managed to gain the trust and goodwill of his counterparts, which allowed him to be more effective in steering the day-to-day business of the House. Pickersgill himself later recognized the importance of informal relationships and arrangements when he shared the following anecdote:

There was always trouble keeping government business moving smoothly and quickly through the House. Grégoire, who was the House leader for the *Créditistes*, was a spasmodic and unpredictable trouble-maker. He had quickly become a skilful parliamentarian, extremely adept at obstruction. On one occasion, when the government was anxious to conclude a particular measure, he threatened to hold up business indefinitely. I asked one of our backbenchers to find out what he really wanted. It was a Friday and the report was that Grégoire wanted two tickets to the hockey game in Montreal. I had never been to a professional hockey game in my life and had no idea how to go about getting tickets, but I told my friend to get the tickets for him, whatever the cost. The tickets were got and given to Grégoire who dropped his filibuster at once and went off to Montreal (Pickersgill, 1986, p. 229).

Conversely, we also saw how the lack of close personal relationships and good will can negatively influence certain behaviours and outcomes. For example, we related personal and historical accounts of how Diefenbaker's personality made it difficult for others to work with him, not only within his party but outside as well, and, both when he served as prime minister and leader of the opposition. In a particularly pertinent observation, one author commented on the fact that there was a sense amongst political opponents that Diefenbaker, when he was prime minister, especially during his second minority government (1962-1963), and, when he was leader of the opposition facing Pearson's minority governments, did not play fair. Newman (1968) wrote: "One reason the smaller parties refused to deal with Diefenbaker was that he continually broke the Commons' unwritten rules, which hold that certain things aren't done, even in the extreme heat of partisanship" (p. 109). This refrain of unfair play and excessive partisanship is also often leveled at Prime Minister Harper. There is a sense amongst many parliamentary watchers that Harper's tactics are at odds with parliamentary tradition, which is based on concepts of fair play and "gentlemanly" behaviour. His strategic and creative use of parliamentary rules and procedure loopholes are leading to a shift of the definition of political success from standards of consensus building to a measure of a government's ability to outplay its opposition in Parliament and manipulate circumstances leading to the coercive support of its agenda.

## **II Implications of the Findings**

On a theoretical level, as previously mentioned, the main contributions of this study are that it adds to the empirical knowledge of the minority experience in Canada and provides a conceptual framework by which we can better understand legislative politics and its impact on the success of minority governments in Canada and elsewhere. This framework is applicable to other minority governments at the provincial level in Canada and to other Westminster-style parliamentary democracies.

Essentially, our study of the success of minority governments has strengthened our framework which was grounded in and supported by three theoretical perspectives, namely rational choice, new institutionalism, and party systems. In order of their strategic merit in achieving viability and effectiveness, it is clear from our analysis that the rational choice perspective most reliably accounts for these outcomes. Our study has highlighted the importance of legislative politics, and, in particular, the importance of capacity and skill in the exercise of legislative politics.

New institutionalism and party systems also have an impact in that they provide constraints and frameworks within which strategic actors can act. Within the parliamentary context, it is the individual skill set of parliamentary actors in manipulating institutional and party system levers which most significantly is the contributing factor to their government's duration and ability to successfully pass its

legislative agenda. In other words, it is the use or misuse of institutional structures (i.e., norms, procedures, and rules) as well as the current state of the party system (i.e., fractionalization, polarization, and ideological diversity) which, depending on the ability or lack of ability of the significant parliamentary actors (i.e., prime minister, leader of the opposition, party leaders, and House leaders), will lead to the success or the downfall of the government.

On a practical level, there are some lessons for future minority governments. First, future minority governments need to fully appreciate and accept the position that they find themselves in. At the outset, Canadian politicians need to reconsider their view that minority governments are unfortunate mishaps that are temporary in nature and will soon lead to a majority government. As argued by Russell (2008), “If we are ever to have stability in the governments reflective of our divided electorates, this mindset will have to change” (p. 63). Within this new mindset, they need to critically assess their bargaining position and the wide range of options available to them. Forming a coalition government should not be ruled out automatically as has been the tradition in Canada. Also, as pointed out by Geller-Schwartz (1979), between the latter option just mentioned and the politically risky move of acting like a majority, governments can access a wider range of possibilities, such as informal agreements as was the case in 1972-1974 and formalized written agreements. Once having accepted their minority position as an opportunity to govern and not a motivation to exploit opportunities to achieve a later majority, their focus would be on building consensus via conciliation, cooperation, and flexibility. This behaviour

and the projection of an image of a strong, focused, and competent government need not be mutually exclusive. This greater emphasis on consensus building will increase a minority government's agenda control without having to resort to actions and behaviours that abuse parliamentary traditions and potentially erode the electorate's belief in, and support of, Parliament and Government.

The adversarial nature of our parliamentary system would seem to be incompatible with what we have just stated. However, we contend that, in a minority situation, the traditional adversarial position within a two-party system must be reconsidered. In order for a minority government to work, political actors, the media along with the electorate must be encouraged to set aside this rigid position in favour of a more conciliatory view of positive debate and negotiation.

### **III      Limitations of Study**

We have identified the following methodological limitations of our study. First, the operational definition we have adopted for the central concept of our research proposal, success, raises some interesting questions. For example, some may argue that defining success as duration (viability) and output (effectiveness) is too constraining and limiting in scope; that other more qualitative measurements, such as the historical and national importance of specific legislative proposals, need to be considered as well. Such thinking could ultimately lead us down a slippery slope of normative judgments which mistakenly equates successful government with good

government. Our study did not seek to evaluate whether Canada's minority governments have been good governments, nor did it seek to evaluate whether they have served Canadians well. While these pursuits are relevant and useful, they are matters to be dealt with in other studies.

However, the question of how to measure the weight of our two variables, duration and output, in the overall success equation, does appear to be a valid one. For example, Diefenbaker (1) was short on duration but high on output, whereas Harper (1) was long on duration but low on output. Which government was more successful? Our study did not directly address this question. However, generally speaking, we would argue that legislative achievement is more important than longevity.

In addition, our research does not allow us to predict the success of a minority government at its outset. Though this was not the stated goal of our study, it is clear that isolating the specific motivations, considerations, and determinations of political actors and political parties that lead to successful political action is a challenging exercise. Indeed, there are many interrelated and complex factors that bear on this issue. For example, the very meaningful interplay of factors within Parliament and within the various parties as well as the historical changes that can occur and the influence of media and public opinion all impact on a minority government's success. More importantly, how these factors interact towards a given outcome

depends on the nature and skill of the various parliamentary actors in using them purposefully and successfully, which is difficult to foretell.

Finally, our choice of measurements, House of Commons sitting days for duration and proportion of government bills passed for output, could also be seen as too limiting in light of all of the activities and events that occur outside of Parliament, especially in a 24/7 media dominated environment. We know that how media report on government and its activities heavily influences public opinion and perceptions, which ultimately influences public confidence in Canada's political institutions, notably Parliament.

#### **IV      Suggestions for Further Research**

Given our conclusion regarding the great significance of strategic actors, it is clear that further study on the characteristics of key parliamentary actors (i.e., prime minister, leader of the opposition, party leaders) and their impact on the viability and effectiveness of their minority government is called for. In particular, more research is required on the role and impact of House leaders on the functioning of minority Parliaments. Also, these parliamentary actors and their behaviours need to be examined using new and innovative perspectives coming from the field of legislative politics but also from other alternative areas of study, which could enrich our understanding and appreciation of their roles. For example, the analysis of military

strategic thinking and its application to the parliamentary arena could potentially further elucidate the actions of these actors.

If we agree that good government implies the involvement of all parliamentary representatives whether they sit on the government or opposition benches then, we must also agree that consensus building and majority building are the favoured mode of operation in achieving viability and effectiveness. The crafty and witty manipulation of institutional loopholes and relative party strengths and weaknesses only serve to deepen the cynical and hopeless view of the electorate, thereby eroding their confidence in their elected representatives. We believe that this aim is, in itself, sufficient motivation to further study and promote strategies, styles, and approaches to governing which enhance both bargaining power and agenda control in ways that respect parliamentary tradition. The ultimate goal of such research would be to provide an organized approach or model of parliamentary behaviour and actions which would lead to the desired outcomes of a government in a minority position.

In a more practical vein, the absence of clearly and operationally determined definitions of such constitutional conventions as confidence, prorogation, and power of dissolution severely limits any work on parliamentary features and government success. As we have seen with Harper (1), the wide ranging interpretation and

manipulation of these conventions make *ad hoc* determinations unreliable.<sup>145</sup> As called for by Desserud (2006) and others, what is required is further research on the processes, implications, and feasibility of clearly defining what constitutes a question of confidence. Also, as argued by Russell (2009), perhaps the time has come to study the possibility of writing down the rules and principles governing the exercise of the Crown's reserve powers (pp. 147-148).

Finally, the events of the fall of 2008, when the Liberals and New Democrats attempted to form a coalition government demonstrated a lack of knowledge and familiarity with the politics and the process of building coalitions amongst the electorate, the media and, surprisingly, some political elites (Russell & Sossin, 2009). Recent events in the United Kingdom where a coalition government appears to be a viable and efficient state of minority government reveals possible merits of further study of coalition government for the purpose of educating both politicians and the general public. Further studies of possible coalition formation and maintenance as well as of the legislative output of coalitions might be of use in dispelling current unfavourable beliefs that have evolved over the concept of multiple party governments. The objective of such research would be to provide a positive framework for the creation of a stable and successful coalition government in the Canadian context.

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<sup>145</sup> This was also evident in other minority governments, such as Martin 2004-2006 and Harper 2008-present.

The prevalence of minority outcomes in Canadian elections and the probability of further minority governments make these suggestions of future research on strategic actors within current institutional and party structures in minority contexts very timely and meritorious.

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Prime Minister of Canada: <http://www.pm.gc.ca>

Toronto Star: <http://www.thestar.com>

## Appendix A

### Canada's 12 Minority Governments

| Prime Minister              | Party                    | Dates       | Number of seats short of majority <sup>146</sup> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| William Lyon Mackenzie King | Liberal                  | 1921 – 1925 | 2                                                |
| William Lyon Mackenzie King | Liberal                  | 1925 – 1926 | 24                                               |
| Arthur Meighen              | Conservative             | 1926        | 7 <sup>147</sup>                                 |
| John Diefenbaker            | Progressive Conservative | 1957 – 1958 | 21                                               |
| John Diefenbaker            | Progressive Conservative | 1962 – 1963 | 17                                               |
| Lester Pearson              | Liberal                  | 1963 – 1965 | 4                                                |
| Lester Pearson              | Liberal                  | 1965 – 1968 | 2                                                |
| Pierre Trudeau              | Liberal                  | 1972 – 1974 | 24                                               |
| Joe Clark                   | Progressive Conservative | 1979 – 1980 | 6                                                |
| Paul Martin                 | Liberal                  | 2004 – 2006 | 20                                               |
| Stephen Harper              | Conservative             | 2006 – 2008 | 31                                               |
| Stephen Harper              | Conservative             | 2008 – ?    | 12                                               |

<sup>146</sup> As of election night.

<sup>147</sup> Meighen was not elected. Lord Byng refused King's request for dissolution and appointed Meighen prime minister.

## **Appendix B**

### **Chronology of Events – Diefenbaker (1)**

#### **1957**

|             |                                                                                                               |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June 10     | Canada's 23 <sup>rd</sup> General Election: Progressive Conservatives form minority government with 112 seats |
| June 17     | St. Laurent offers resignation to governor general<br>Diefenbaker invited to form government                  |
| June 21     | Diefenbaker government sworn in                                                                               |
| August 26   | PC by-election victory in Lanark (ON)                                                                         |
| September 6 | St. Laurent announces intention to retire                                                                     |
| October 14  | Opening of the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Parliament                                                                    |
| November 4  | PC by-election victory in Hastings-Frontenac (ON)                                                             |
| December 16 | PC by-election victory in Yukon (Yukon)                                                                       |

#### **1958**

|            |                                                         |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| January 16 | Pearson chosen leader of LPC                            |
| January 20 | Pearson's maiden speech in House of Commons             |
| February 1 | Dissolution of Parliament                               |
| March 31   | Canada's 24 <sup>th</sup> General Election: PC majority |

## Appendix C

### Key Votes – Diefenbaker (1)

| DATE          | VOTE RESPECTING                        | SPONSOR        | YEAS                                                           | NAYS                                                                                   | RESULT    |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Oct. 17, 1957 | Supply Bill (interim) 2r.              | Fleming (PC)   | 194<br>PC 95<br>LIB 57<br>CCF 23<br>SC 16<br>IND 2<br>IND PC 1 | 1<br>LIB 1                                                                             | Agreed to |
| Nov. 11, 1957 | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt. to amdt. | Low (SC)       | 16<br><br>SC 16                                                | 139<br><br>PC 68<br>LIB 46<br>CCF 21<br>IND 1<br>IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1<br>LIB LABOUR 1 | Negated   |
| Nov. 14, 1957 | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt.          | Coldwell (CCF) | 25<br><br>CCF 21<br>LIB 4                                      | 152<br><br>PC 86<br>LIB 45<br>SC 16<br>IND 2<br>IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1<br>LIB LABOUR 1  | Negated   |
| Nov. 15, 1957 | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt. to amdt. | Argue (CCF)    | 23<br><br>CCF 18<br>LIB 3<br>IND 2                             | 122<br><br>PC 70<br>LIB 36<br>SC 13<br>IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1<br>LIB LABOUR 1           | Negated   |
| Nov. 15, 1957 | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt.          | Lacroix (Lib.) | 23<br><br>CCF 17<br>LIB 3<br>IND 2                             | 122<br><br>PC 71<br>LIB 36<br>SC 12                                                    | Negated   |

|                  |                                                                               |                   |                                                                                                    |                                                                       |           |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
|                  |                                                                               |                   | SC 1                                                                                               | IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1<br>LIB LABOUR<br>1                              |           |
| Dec. 10,<br>1957 | Trans-Canada<br>pipe line, public<br>ownership,<br>amdt. to supply<br>motion  | Coldwell<br>(CCF) | 22<br><br>CCF 22                                                                                   | 172<br><br>PC 89<br>LIB 63<br>SC 16<br>IND 2<br>IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1 | Negated   |
| Dec. 12, 1957    | Excise tax bill<br>2r.<br><br>Bill No. 231, to<br>amend the<br>Excise Tax Act | Fleming (PC)      | 175<br><br>PC 84<br>LIB 52<br>CCF 21<br>SC 13<br>IND 2<br>IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1<br>LIB LABOUR<br>1 | Nil                                                                   | Agreed to |
| Jan. 7, 1958     | Education,<br>federal aid,<br>amdt. to supply<br>motion                       | Coldwell<br>(CCF) | 27<br><br>CCF 25<br>LIB 1<br>SC 1                                                                  | 163<br><br>PC 90<br>LIB 59<br>SC 10<br>IND 2<br>IND LIB 1<br>IND PC 1 | Negated   |
| Jan. 21, 1958    | Government<br>resignation,<br>amdt. to supply<br>motion                       | Pearson (LIB)     | 95<br><br>LIB 92<br>IND LIB 2<br>LIB LAB 1                                                         | 150<br><br>PC 106<br>CCF 24<br>SC 17<br>IND 2<br>IND PC 1             | Negated   |

## Appendix D

### Government Bills – Diefenbaker (1)

**The following is a list of the government bills (27) passed in the House of Commons by the Diefenbaker Government from 1957 to 1958.**

|         |                                                        |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| No. 14  | Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act                     |
| No. 19  | Old Age Security Act (amdt)                            |
| No. 21  | Blind Persons Act (amdt)                               |
| No. 23  | Disabled Persons Act (amdt)                            |
| No. 20  | Old Age Assistance Act (amdt)                          |
| No. 28  | War Veterans Allowance Act (amdt)                      |
| No. 171 | Unemployment Insurance Act amdt                        |
| No. 194 | Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Company Act (amdt) |
| No. 169 | Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act (amdt)    |
| No. 72  | Canadian Vessel Construction Assistance Act (amdt)     |
| No. 196 | Canadian National Railways                             |
| No. 231 | Excise Tax Act (amdt)                                  |
| No. 199 | Export Credits Insurance Act (amdt)                    |
| No. 197 | Hamilton Harbour Commissioners                         |
| No. 232 | Income Tax Act (amdt)                                  |
| No. 238 | National Housing Act (amdt)                            |
| No. 35  | Pension Act (amdt)                                     |
| No. 240 | Unemployment Assistance Act (amdt)                     |
| No. 237 | Agricultural Stabilization Act                         |
| No. 26  | Alberta-North West Territories Act                     |
| No. 16  | Annual Vacations Act                                   |
| No. 244 | Atlantic Provinces Power Development Act               |
| No. 243 | Beechwood Power Project Loan                           |
| No. 170 | Canada-Australian Income Tax Agreement Act             |
| No. 241 | Criminal Code (amdt)                                   |
| No. 247 | Federal-Provincial Tax-Sharing Arrangements Act (amdt) |
| No. 249 | Northwest Territories Act (amdt)                       |

## Appendix E

### Chronology of Events – Pearson (1)<sup>148</sup>

#### **1963**

|          |                                                                                                               |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 8  | Canada's 26 <sup>th</sup> General Election: Liberals form minority government with 129 seats                  |
| April 12 | Letter of support sent to governor general by six Social Credit members                                       |
| April 13 | Support is withdrawn                                                                                          |
| April 17 | Diefenbaker announces his resignation as prime minister                                                       |
| April 22 | Pearson government sworn in                                                                                   |
| May 16   | First session of 26 <sup>th</sup> Parliament opens                                                            |
| May 21   | Liberals win non-confidence vote on nuclear arms                                                              |
| June 13  | Gordon brings down first budget                                                                               |
| June 14  | Gordon reveals names of "the bright boys", three young Toronto businessmen brought in the help prepare budget |
| June 19  | Gordon announces withdrawal of 30% takeover tax in budget                                                     |
| June 20  | Sixtieth Day of Decision<br>Gordon offers resignation, which is not accepted                                  |
| June 24  | Government survives PC motion of non-confidence in Minister of Finance                                        |
| July 8   | Gordon tables revised version of budget                                                                       |
| July 22  | Names of the chairmen of Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism announced                         |

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<sup>148</sup> The following information originates from Newman, 1968, pp. 523-537. See also the *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs 1963, 1964 and 1965*.

|             |                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 29     | House approves raising members' salaries to \$18,000 a year                                                                              |
| August 2    | Municipal development and loan bill passed by House                                                                                      |
| September 2 | Social Credit split; House seats now <i>Ralliement des Cr ditistes</i> under R al Caouette, 13, Social Credit under Robert Thompson, 11. |
| December 21 | Prorogation of Parliament                                                                                                                |
| December 27 | Lionel Chevrier and Azellus Denis resign from Pearson Cabinet                                                                            |

## **1964**

|              |                                                                                                                           |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 20   | Reconstruction of Liberal cabinet                                                                                         |
| February 1-5 | PC annual convention in Ottawa, where proposal for secret-ballot vote of confidence on Diefenbaker's leadership defeated. |
| February 5   | L on Balcer accepted by Diefenbaker as Quebec PC lieutenant                                                               |
| February 10  | Liberal victories in Laurier and St. Denis federal by-elections                                                           |
| February 18  | Second session of 26 <sup>th</sup> Parliament opens                                                                       |
| March 16     | Second Gordon budget                                                                                                      |
| April 20     | Pearson announces new federal-provincial fiscal arrangements                                                              |
| April 23     | Social Credit MP's G rard Girouard and G rard Ouellet join PC caucus                                                      |
| May 17       | Pearson booed at Legion convention in Winnipeg when he discusses new Canadian flag proposal                               |
| May 21       | Federal cabinet approves proposed flag design, three red maple leaves on white background flanked by vertical blue bars.  |

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 27       | Pearson announces proposed design of new Canadian flag to House                                                                                                                           |
| June 15      | Flag debate begins in House                                                                                                                                                               |
| June 22      | Saskatoon and Nipissing federal by-elections                                                                                                                                              |
| July 9       | House approves legislation extending Canada's coastal fishing limits to twelve miles                                                                                                      |
| July 22      | PC caucus adopts flag filibuster                                                                                                                                                          |
| July 28      | Student Loans Act established offering university students loans up to \$5,000                                                                                                            |
| September 10 | Deadlock in Commons; flag debate temporarily broken with decision to place question in hands of 15-person committee                                                                       |
| September 23 | Gordon introduces legislation to guard against foreign take-over of certain Canadian financial institutions                                                                               |
| October 29   | House committee (by vote of 10 to 4 with English-speaking PCs opposed) recommends Canadian flag design of single red maple leaf on white background with vertical red bars at either end. |
| November 9   | Westmoreland and Waterloo South federal by-elections                                                                                                                                      |
| November 23  | PC MP Erik Nielsen breaks Rivard scandal                                                                                                                                                  |
| November 24  | Guy Favreau announces Dorion judicial inquiry on Rivard charge. Guy Rouleau resigns as parliamentary assistant to Pearson after admitting he made representation in the case.             |
| November 27  | Government agrees to widen terms of Dorion Inquiry                                                                                                                                        |
| November 30  | Flag debate resumes<br>Pearson's letter on political morality to cabinet                                                                                                                  |
| December 5   | PC executive council meets in Ottawa                                                                                                                                                      |
| December 11  | Government announces closure on flag debate                                                                                                                                               |
| December 15  | Beginning of Dorion hearings<br>Commons approves flag at 2:13 a.m.                                                                                                                        |

December 21                      Léon Balcer hints he may leave PC caucus

**1965**

January 14                      Ten Quebec PC MP's demand leadership convention

January 22                      Pearson makes public Yvon Dupuis' letter of resignation

February 6                      PC national executive meets in Ottawa; Léon Balcer's call for a leadership convention rejected

February 11                     Jean-Paul Deschatelets resigns from federal cabinet

February 14                     Guy Rouleau resigns as chairman of Liberal caucus

February 15                     New Canadian flag raised in Ottawa for first time

February 18                     MP Rémi Paul leaves PC caucus sit as Independent as protest against Deifenbaker leadership

February 25                     Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism issues interim report on "greatest crisis in [Canada's] history"

March 2                         Lucien Rivard escapes from Montreal's Bordeaux jail

March 29                        House approves Canada Pension Plan

April 3                         Prorogation of Parliament

April 5                         Third session of 26<sup>th</sup> Parliament opens

April 7                         Léon Balcer leaves PC Party to sit as independent MP

April 26                        Third Gordon Budget

June 28                        Dorion Report submitted to government

June 29                        Guy Favreau resigns as Justice Minister as result of criticism contained in Dorion report

July 7                         Minor Liberal cabinet shuffle

July 16                        Lucien Rivard arrested

|             |                                                                      |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 22     | Rivard extradited to U.S.                                            |
| September 7 | Pearson calls general election for November 8                        |
| November 8  | Canada's 27 <sup>th</sup> General Election: another Liberal minority |

## Appendix F

A copy of the notarized letter sent to Governor General Georges P. Vanier (with a copy to Pearson and the press) on April 12, 1963 (4 days after the general election) stating the six signatories' support for a Pearson-led Liberal government.<sup>149</sup>

*« Nous, soussignés, dûment élus députés de la province de Québec au Parlement fédéral, avons pris connaissance de la déclaration du Premier ministre, comparant le résultat de l'élection de 1963 avec le résultat de l'élection de 1925, alors que le gouvernement de Mackenzie King est resté au pouvoir et a affronté le Parlement même si un autre parti avait élu 15 membres de plus.*

*Nous constatons que la situation en 1963 est très différente de celle de 1925. En effet, deux fois en moins d'une année, le gouvernement Diefenbaker n'a pu remporter une majorité au Parlement. L'élection de 1963 a eu lieu parce que le gouvernement Diefenbaker avait perdu la confiance du Parlement et, à l'élection du 8 avril, c'est le peuple lui-même qui a perdu confiance en un gouvernement Diefenbaker puisqu'il a réduit à près de 20 pour cent la députation conservatrice.*

*Un tel gouvernement, à notre point de vue, n'a aucun droit démocratique de demeurer en fonction si un autre gouvernement peut être formé par un parti appuyé par une plus forte majorité de la part de l'électorat.*

*Nous croyons qu'il n'est pas dans l'intérêt du peuple canadien de répéter l'expérience de 1962, alors que le gouvernement Diefenbaker a administré avec la crainte d'être défait à tout moment, causant par le fait même un malaise économique.*

*Nous croyons plutôt que le Canada a besoin d'un gouvernement stable afin de rétablir la confiance, tant au point de vue national qu'international.*

*Un tel gouvernement devra avoir l'assurance d'une majorité absolue au Parlement et ce, dans l'intérêt supérieur de la nation. Si, lors du dernier Parlement, le parti conservateur avec 116 députés n'a pu procurer au pays un gouvernement stable, comment le pourra-t-il*

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<sup>149</sup> The six Sacred MPs: Beaulieu, Boutin, Langlois, Plourde, Perron, Plourde.

*avec un nombre de députés réduit à 96 et avec la perte de la plupart de ses ministres qui avaient de l'expérience.*

*D'un autre côté, le parti Libéral sous la direction de M. Pearson, a presque une majorité absolue. La proportion du vote a été de 47 pour cent en sa faveur.*

*Dans la députation fédérale du Québec, le parti Libéral a la majorité absolue. Ces résultats démontrent que le parti Libéral a un droit démocratique de former le prochain Gouvernement. Lui seul peut nous donner un gouvernement stable; et, au Parlement, pour ce faire, il doit compter sur une majorité assurée afin d'administrer et de légiférer pour rencontrer les problèmes urgents du pays, les besoins urgents du peuple.*

*Nous croyons qu'un tel gouvernement doit être formé sans délai afin qu'il puisse préparer immédiatement un programme d'action pour le soumettre au Parlement.*

*Nous annonçons publiquement être prêts à donner notre appui à un gouvernement libéral dirigé par M. Pearson, non parce que nous sommes libéraux, mais parce que nous croyons que le plus grand intérêt du peuple canadien consiste à maintenir un gouvernement stable, capable d'agir avec assurance pour régler les graves problèmes intérieurs et extérieurs auxquels notre pays fait face.*

*Nous donnons cette assurance d'un appui parce que nous espérons que M. Pearson est sincère dans sa détermination de faire tout en son pouvoir pour réaliser un Canada en lequel les Canadiens français et les Canadiens anglais seront des Canadiens partenaires égaux dans la Confédération.*

*Nous comptons que M. Pearson réalisera le biculturalisme au Canada, donnera au pays un drapeau distinctif, reconnaîtra « O Canada » comme hymne national et augmentera les allocations familiales proportionnellement au coût de la vie tel que promis par le parti Libéral lors de la dernière élection.*

*Et ce, dans le plus bref délai réalisable.*

*Nous sommes convaincus que le besoin le plus urgent au Canada est d'avoir un gouvernement stable, assuré d'une majorité au Parlement et, avec cette conviction, nous croyons qu'il est de notre devoir, dans l'intérêt de nos électeurs, de notre province et du Canada tout entier, d'offrir notre appui à M. Pearson afin qu'il puisse former un gouvernement assuré d'une majorité au Parlement.*

*Cette offre est faite volontairement et librement. Nous n'espérons aucune faveur en retour sinon la satisfaction du devoir accompli.*

*Nous avons l'intention d'appuyer le gouvernement Pearson tant et aussi longtemps qu'il agira avec fermeté et sagesse pour apporter au peuple canadien la direction dynamique dont il a tant besoin pour relancer le pays vers sa destinée que nous voulons aussi brillante que possible. Et ce faisant, le sortir de sa stagnation et lui redonner la prospérité.*

*Si toutefois, il se présente devant la Chambre une motion concernant les armes nucléaires, nous nous réservons le droit d'un vote selon notre conscience. »*

*Le Devoir*, 13 avril 1963 (as cited in Huguet, 1981, pp. 239-241).

## Appendix G

### Key Votes – Pearson (1)

| DATE          | VOTE RESPECTING                                       | SPONSOR          | YEAS                                             | NAYS                                                                | RESULT  |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| May 21, 1963  | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                | Douglas (NDP)    | 113<br><br>PC 79<br>SC 17<br>NDP 16<br>IND. SC 1 | 124<br><br>LIB 118<br>SC 4<br>PC 2                                  | Negated |
| May 23, 1963  | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt.                         | Diefenbaker (PC) | 76<br><br>PC 76                                  | 147<br><br>LIB 115<br>SC 17<br>NDP 15                               | Negated |
| June 24, 1963 | Budget<br><br>Amdt.                                   | Nowlan (PC)      | 73<br><br>PC 73                                  | 113<br><br>LIB 103<br>SC 10                                         | Negated |
| July 2, 1963  | Supply Motion<br><br>Economic Policies<br><br>Amdt.   | Diefenbaker (PC) | 75<br><br>PC 61<br>NDP 13<br>IND. SC 1           | 115<br><br>LIB 96<br>SC 18<br>NDP 1                                 | Negated |
| Oct.14, 1963  | Supply Motion<br><br>Feed Grain<br><br>Amdt. to amdt. | Thompson (SC)    | 22<br><br>NDP 13<br>SC 8<br>IND. SC 1            | 208<br><br>LIB 110<br>PC 84<br><i>Rall.</i> 13<br>NDP 1             | Negated |
| Oct.15, 1963  | Supply Motion<br><br>Feed Grain<br><br>Amdt.          | Hamilton (PC)    | 95<br><br>PC 82<br><i>Rall.</i> 13               | 134<br><br>LIB 110<br>NDP 14<br>SC 9<br>IND. SC                     | Negated |
| Oct. 21, 1963 | Supply Motion<br><br>Labour Relations<br><br>Amdt.    | Diefenbaker (PC) | 79<br><br>PC 79                                  | 137<br><br>LIB 106<br>NDP 13<br><i>Rall.</i> 9<br>SC 8<br>IND. SC 1 | Negated |

|               |                                                                                 |                                   |                                                                              |                                                                      |           |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Oct. 29, 1963 | Supply Motion<br><br>Defence Projects<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                     | Caouette<br>( <i>Ralliement</i> ) | 27<br><br><i>Rall.</i> 13<br>NDP 8<br>SC 5<br>IND. SC 1                      | 210<br><br>LIB 119<br>PC 86<br>NDP 5                                 | Negated   |
| Oct. 29, 1963 | Supply Motion<br><br>Defence Projects<br><br>Amdt.                              | Churchill (PC)                    | 85<br><br>PC 85                                                              | 155<br><br>LIB 119<br>NDP 15<br><i>Rall.</i> 13<br>SC 7<br>IND. SC 1 | Negated   |
| Nov. 5, 1963  | Supply Motion<br><br>Unemployment<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                         | Fisher (NDP)                      | 92<br><br>PC 75<br>NDP 12<br><i>Rall.</i> 5                                  | 118<br><br>LIB 110<br>SC 7<br>NDP 1                                  | Negated   |
| Nov. 5, 1963  | Supply Motion<br><br>Amdt.                                                      | Starr (PC)                        | 75<br><br>PC 75                                                              | 123<br><br>LIB 110<br>SC 7<br><i>Rall.</i> 5<br>NDP 1                | Negated   |
| Nov. 12, 1963 | Supply Motion<br><br>Lack of consultations with provinces<br><br>Amdt. to amdt. | Douglas (NDP)                     | 128<br><br>LIB 98<br>NDP 12<br><i>Rall.</i> 10<br>SC 7<br>IND. SC 1          | 60<br><br>PC 60                                                      | Agreed to |
| Nov. 12, 1963 | Supply Motion<br><br>Lack of consultations with provinces<br><br>Amdt.          | Hamilton (PC)                     | 187<br><br>LIB 98<br>PC 60<br>NDP 12<br><i>Rall.</i> 10<br>SC 6<br>IND. SC 1 | 0                                                                    | Agreed to |
| xxxxxxx       | xxxxxxx                                                                         | xxxxxxx                           | xxxxxxx                                                                      | xxxxxxx                                                              | xxxxxxx   |
| Feb. 21, 1964 | Reply to Address<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                                          | Douglas (NDP)                     | 87<br><br>PC 71<br>NDP 16                                                    | 134<br><br>LIB 116<br><i>Rall.</i> 12<br>SC 4<br>NDP 1<br>IND. SC 1  | Negated   |

|                |                                                                     |                                   |                                                                    |                                                                      |         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Feb.25, 1964   | Reply to<br>Address<br><br>Amdt.                                    | Diefenbaker<br>(PC)               | 120<br><br>PC 89<br>NDP 15<br><i>Rall.</i> 12<br>SC 3<br>IND. SC 1 | 128<br><br>LIB 123<br>SC 3<br>NDP 2                                  | Negated |
| Feb. 27, 1964  | Reply to<br>Address<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                           | Langlois<br>( <i>Ralliement</i> ) | 25<br><br>NDP 14<br><i>Rall.</i> 11                                | 222<br><br>LIB 121<br>PC 88<br>SC 10<br>NDP 2<br>IND. SC 1           | Negated |
| Feb. 27, 1964  | Reply to<br>Address<br><br>Amdt.                                    | Ricard (PC)                       | 113<br><br>PC 88<br>NDP 14<br><i>Rall.</i> 11                      | 134<br><br>LIB 121<br>SC 10<br>NDP 2<br>IND. SC 1                    | Negated |
| Mar. 20, 1964  | Budget<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                                        | Cameron<br>(NDP)                  | 20<br><br>NDP 12<br><i>Rall.</i> 8                                 | 180<br><br>LIB 102<br>PC 70<br>SC 6<br>NDP 1<br>IND. SC 1            | Negated |
| Mar. 24, 1964  | Budget<br><br>Amdt.                                                 | Nowlan (PC)                       | 80<br><br>PC 80                                                    | 150<br><br>LIB 111<br>NDP 17<br><i>Rall.</i> 13<br>SC 8<br>IND. SC 1 | Negated |
| April 21, 1964 | Supply Motion<br><br>Veterans'<br>Hospitals<br><br>Amdt.            | Churchill (PC)                    | 94<br><br>PC 82<br>NDP 12                                          | 123<br><br>LIB 106<br><i>Rall.</i> 10<br>SC 6<br>IND. SC 1           | Negated |
| May 5, 1964    | Supply Motion<br><br>National Water<br>Policy<br><br>Amdt. to amdt. | Grégoire<br>( <i>Ralliement</i> ) | 12<br><br><i>Rall.</i> 12                                          | 210<br><br>LIB 110<br>PC 81<br>NDP 12<br>SC 6<br>IND. SC 1           | Negated |

|                |                                                         |                          |                                                                   |                                                                      |         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| May 5, 1964    | Supply Motion<br><br>National Water Policy<br><br>Amdt. | Dinsdale (PC)            | 78<br><br>PC 78                                                   | 141<br><br>LIB 110<br>NDP 12<br><i>Rall.</i> 12<br>SC 6<br>IND. SC 1 | Negated |
| May 26, 1964   | Supply Motion<br><br>Eastern Agriculture<br><br>Amdt.   | Hamilton (PC)            | 112<br><br>PC 89<br>NDP 12<br><i>Rall.</i> 11                     | 130<br><br>LIB 120<br>SC 8<br>NDP 2                                  | Negated |
| xxxxxxx        | xxxxxxx                                                 | xxxxxxx                  | xxxxxxx                                                           | xxxxxxx                                                              | xxxxxxx |
| April 7, 1965  | Reply to Address<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                  | Douglas (NDP)            | 84<br><br>PC 70<br>NDP 14                                         | 129<br><br>LIB 105<br><i>Rall.</i> 13<br>SC 8<br>IND. 2<br>IND. SC 1 | Negated |
| April 9, 1965  | Reply to Address<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                  | Marcoux (IND. SC)        | *lost, on division                                                | *no recorded vote                                                    | Negated |
| April 9, 1965  | Reply to Address<br><br>Amdt.                           | Diefenbaker (PC)         | 93<br><br>PC 66<br><i>Rall.</i> 11<br>NDP 10<br>SC 5<br>IND. SC 1 | 106<br><br>LIB 104<br>IND. 2                                         | Negated |
| April 12, 1965 | Reply to Address<br><br>Amdt.                           | Plourde ( <i>Rall.</i> ) | 32<br><br>PC 20<br><i>Rall.</i> 11<br>SC 1                        | 126<br><br>LIB 78<br>PC 32<br>NDP 12<br>SC 3<br>IND. 1               | Negated |
| April 29, 1965 | Bduget<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                            | Cameron (NDP)            | 90<br><br>PC 63<br>NDP 15<br><i>Rall.</i> 10<br>IND. 2            | 106<br><br>LIB 102<br>SC 4                                           | Negated |

|              |                                                           |                    |                                              |                                                   |         |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------|
| May 3, 1965  | Budget<br>Amdt.                                           | Mr. Nowlan<br>(PC) | 100<br><br>PC 80<br>NDP 11<br><i>Rall.</i> 9 | 111<br><br>LIB 102<br>SC 6<br>IND. 2<br>IND. SC 1 | Negated |
| May 11, 1965 | Supply Motion<br><br>Automobile<br>Agreement<br><br>Amdt. | Douglas (NDP)      | 95<br><br>PC 69<br>NDP 15<br><i>Rall.</i> 11 | 110<br><br>LIB 105<br>SC 5                        | Negated |

## Appendix H

### Government Bills – Pearson (1)

The following is a list of the government bills passed by the Pearson Government from 1963 to 1965.

#### First Session

|       |                                                                                                |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| C-69  | Supply (interim)                                                                               |
| C-72  | Economic Council of Canada                                                                     |
| C-74  | Industry Department                                                                            |
| C-76  | Municipal Development and Loan                                                                 |
| C-80  | Atlantic Development Board Act amdt.                                                           |
| C-86  | Supply (special)                                                                               |
| C-87  | Customs Tariff amdt.                                                                           |
| C-88  | Surcharge on Imports                                                                           |
| C-90  | Excise Tax Act amdt.                                                                           |
| C-91  | Senate and House of Commons Act and the Members of Parliament<br>Retiring Allowances Act amdt. |
| C-92  | Judges Act and the Criminal Code Act amdt.                                                     |
| C-94  | Supply (interim)                                                                               |
| C-95  | Income Tax Act amdt.                                                                           |
| C-98  | Old Age Security Act amdt.                                                                     |
| C-101 | Supply (interim)                                                                               |
| C-102 | Maritime Transportation Unions Trustees                                                        |
| C-105 | Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act amdt.                                         |
| C-106 | Currency, Mint and Exchange Fund Act amdt.                                                     |
| C-107 | Centennial Act amdt.                                                                           |
| C-108 | Admiralty Act amdt. (payments to judge and registrar)                                          |
| C-110 | Railway Act amdt. (grade crossing fund)                                                        |
| C-111 | St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act amdt.                                                        |
| C-112 | Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation Act amdt.                                      |
| C-116 | Supply (interim)                                                                               |
| C-120 | Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition                                             |
| C-121 | Canadian National Railways (appointment of auditors)                                           |
| C-122 | Small Businesses Loans Act amdt.                                                               |
| C-124 | Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act amdt.                                                     |
| C-125 | Blind and Disabled Persons and Old Age Assistance Acts amdt.                                   |
| C-126 | Representation Commissioner                                                                    |
| C-127 | Canadian National Railways Financing and Guarantee                                             |

|       |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| C-128 | Canada Grain, Financial Administration, Income Tax, International Boundary Waters Treaty, National Energy Board, Railway, Salaries, Tariff Board Acts amdt. (salaries) |
| C-129 | Customs Tariff amdt.                                                                                                                                                   |
| C-132 | Supply (main)                                                                                                                                                          |

## Second Session

|       |                                                         |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| C-72  | Electoral Boundaries Readjustment                       |
| C-84  | Supply (interim)                                        |
| C-86  | Supply (supplementary)                                  |
| C-87  | Supply (supplementary)                                  |
| C-89  | Supply (supplementary)                                  |
| C-90  | National Defence Act amdt.                              |
| C-91  | Income Tax Act amdt.                                    |
| C-92  | Customs Tariff amdt.                                    |
| C-94  | Estate Tax Act amdt                                     |
| C-95  | Crown Corporations (Provincial Taxes and Fees)          |
| C-96  | Judges and Exchequer Court Act amdt. (additional judge) |
| C-98  | Bank Act and Quebec Savings Banks Act amdt.             |
| C-99  | Supply (interim)                                        |
| C-100 | Farm Credit Act amdt.                                   |
| C-101 | Export Credits Insurance Act amdt.                      |
| C-102 | National Housing Act amdt.                              |
| C-105 | Supply (interim)                                        |
| C-108 | Youth Allowances                                        |
| C-109 | Supply (supplementary)                                  |
| C-110 | Student Loans                                           |
| C-111 | Federal-Provincial Fiscal Revision, 1964                |
| C-112 | Judges Act amdt.                                        |
| C-116 | Supply (interim)                                        |
| C-119 | Farm Improvement Loans Act amdt.                        |
| C-121 | Farm Machinery Syndicates Credit                        |
| C-123 | Insurance Acts                                          |
| C-126 | Labour (Standards) Code                                 |
| C-129 | Crop Insurance Act amdt.                                |
| C-131 | Merchant Seaman Compensation Act amdt.                  |
| C-135 | Supply (interim)                                        |
| C-136 | Pension Plan                                            |
| C-137 | Canadian National Railways Financing and Guarantee      |
| C-140 | Supply (main)                                           |
| C-141 | Combines Investigation Act and Criminal Code Act amdt.  |
| C-142 | Established Programs (Interim Arrangements)             |
| C-145 | Penitentiary Act amdt.                                  |
| C-146 | Income Tax Conventions                                  |

|       |                                      |
|-------|--------------------------------------|
| C-147 | Coal Production Assistance Act amdt. |
| C-150 | Supply (interim)                     |
| C-151 | Supply (supplementary)               |

### **Third Session**

|       |                                                       |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| C-96  | Excise Tax (refund on designated goods)               |
| C-97  | Public Service Superannuation Act amdt.               |
| C-98  | Senators Retirement                                   |
| C-104 | National Housing Act amdt.                            |
| C-110 | Supply (interim)                                      |
| C-116 | Bank Act and Quebec Savings Banks Act amdt.           |
| C-118 | Income Tax Act amdt.                                  |
| C-119 | Customs Act amdt.                                     |
| C-120 | Customs Tariff amdt.                                  |
| C-121 | Fisheries Improvement Loans Act. Amdt.                |
| C-122 | Supply (supplementary)                                |
| C-124 | Canadian National Railways (Froomfield spur, Sarnia)  |
| C-125 | Children of War Dead (Education Assistance) Act amdt. |
| C-126 | Army Benevolent Fund Act amdt.                        |
| C-127 | War Veterans Allowance Act amdt.                      |
| C-128 | Veterans' Land Act amdt.                              |
| C-129 | Area Development Incentives                           |
| C-130 | Supply (supplementary)                                |
| C-131 | Supply (interim)                                      |

## Appendix I

### Chronology of Events – Clark<sup>150</sup>

#### **1979**

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 22       | Canada's 31 <sup>st</sup> General Election: Progressive Conservatives form minority government with 136 seats                                                                                   |
| May 30       | Trudeau submits his resignation to governor general<br>Clark invited to form government                                                                                                         |
| June 4       | Clark government sworn in                                                                                                                                                                       |
| September 23 | Quebec MP Richard Janelle (Lotbinière) leaves the <i>Créditistes</i> to join the PC caucus                                                                                                      |
| October 9    | Opening of the 31 <sup>st</sup> Parliament                                                                                                                                                      |
| November 19  | PCs lose by-election in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (previously held by Diefenbaker)<br><br>PCs lose by-election in Burin-St. George's, Newfoundland and Labrador (previously held by Liberals) |
| November 21  | Trudeau resigns as leader of the LPC                                                                                                                                                            |
| December 11  | Budget introduced in House                                                                                                                                                                      |
| December 13  | Clark loses vote in House                                                                                                                                                                       |
| December 18  | Trudeau changes his mind and stays on as leader                                                                                                                                                 |

#### **1980**

|             |                                                                   |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 18 | Canada's 32 <sup>nd</sup> General Election: Liberals win majority |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|

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<sup>150</sup>Source: *The Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs, 1979* (edited by R.B. Byers, 1981).

## Appendix J

### Key Votes – Clark

| DATE          | VOTE RESPECTING                                                                                    | SPONSOR         | YEAS                               | NAYS                                | RESULT    |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Oct. 9, 1979  | Committees, Parliamentary, striking committee appointed, amdt. to M. (Clark)                       | Roy (SC)        | 6<br>SC 5<br>NDP 1                 | 247<br>PC 129<br>LIB 97<br>NDP 21   | Negated   |
| Oct. 11, 1979 | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                                                             | Broadbent (NDP) | 27<br><br>NDP 26<br>LIB 1          | 223<br><br>PC 134<br>LIB 85<br>SC 4 | Negated   |
| Oct. 15, 1979 | Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt.                                                                      | Trudeau (LIB)   | 128<br><br>LIB 102<br>NDP 26       | 137<br><br>PC 132<br>SC 5           | Negated   |
| Nov. 6, 1979  | Oil and oil products, price increases and supplies, interest rates, bank rate increases, on supply | Trudeau (LIB)   | 138<br><br>LIB 112<br>NDP 26       | 140<br><br>PC 135<br>SC 5           | Negated   |
| Dec. 4, 1979  | Income Tax Bill (C-20), M. For 2r.                                                                 | Crosbie (PC)    | 138<br><br>PC 132<br>LIB 3<br>SC 3 | 114<br><br>LIB 92<br>NDP 22         | Agreed to |
| Dec. 13, 1979 | Budget<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.                                                                       | Rae (NDP)       | 139<br><br>LIB 112<br>NDP 27       | 133<br><br>PC 133                   | Agreed to |

## **Appendix K**

### **Government Bills – Clark**

**The following is a list of the government bills passed by the Clark Government from 1979 to 1980.**

C-6 Old Age Security Act (amdt)

C-10 Borrowing Authority

C-11 Postal Rates Act

C-17 Income Tax Act (amdt)

C-18 Customs Tariff Act (amdt)

C-23 Supply (interim)

## Appendix L

### Gallop Polls, July to December 1979

\*Party preferences are indicated in percentage points (%)

|                  | <b>Liberal</b> | <b>PC</b> | <b>NDP</b> | <b>Other</b> |
|------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| <b>May Vote</b>  | 40             | 36        | 18         | 6            |
| <b>July</b>      | 43             | 35        | 20         | 3            |
| <b>August</b>    | 40             | 37        | 20         | 4            |
| <b>September</b> | 41             | 37        | 19         | 3            |
| <b>October</b>   | 42             | 37        | 19         | 3            |
| <b>November</b>  | 47             | 28        | 23         | 2            |
| <b>December</b>  | 47             | 27        | 23         | 3            |

Source: *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs, 1979* (1981), p. 79.

## Appendix M

### Chronology of Events – Harper (1)<sup>151</sup>

#### 2006

|             |                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 23  | Canada's 39 <sup>th</sup> General Election: Conservatives form minority government with 124 seats                                                    |
| February 6  | Harper government sworn in                                                                                                                           |
| February 16 | Opposition leader Bill Graham warns that the Liberals will not prop up the government.                                                               |
| March 22    | Bloc Leader Gilles Duceppe indicates he would be willing to support the government as long as Quebec's interests are addressed.                      |
| April 3     | Opening of the 39 <sup>th</sup> Parliament                                                                                                           |
| April 4     | The government lays out its agenda in its SFT.                                                                                                       |
| May 2       | First Conservative budget                                                                                                                            |
| May 16      | A House committee rejects Prime Minister Harper's choice to lead the new public appointments commission.                                             |
| May 17      | Vote on extending Afghanistan mission until February 2009 passes by a slim margin (149-145).                                                         |
| June 6      | The Conservative budget passes through the House without opposition in an apparent scheduling mix-up.                                                |
| November 23 | Economic and Fiscal Update                                                                                                                           |
| November 27 | Motion to recognize the <i>Québécois</i> as constituting a nation within a united Canada passes by a vote of 266 for and 16 against (24 MPs absent). |
| November 27 | 2 By-elections: London North Centre, Ontario (stays Liberal) and Repentigny, Quebec (stays Bloc)                                                     |
| December 2  | Liberals choose Stéphane Dion as their new leader                                                                                                    |

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<sup>151</sup> Source: CBC News on-line: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/timeline.html>

## **2007**

|              |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| March 19     | Second Conservative budget                                                                                                                                                  |
| September 14 | Parliament prorogues: end of first session                                                                                                                                  |
| September 17 | 3 By-elections: Roberval – Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec (Conservatives take from the Bloc); Outrement (NDP take from Liberals); and, Saint-Hyacinthe – Bagot, Quebec (stays Bloc) |
| October 16   | Second session begins with SFT                                                                                                                                              |
| October 30   | Economic Statement                                                                                                                                                          |

## **2008**

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 26 | Budget 2008                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| March 13    | A Conservative motion to keep Canadian soldiers in Kandahar, Afghanistan, until December 2011, passed by a vote of 198 to 77 in the House, with Conservatives and Liberals voting in favour.                                              |
| March 17    | By-elections: Vancouver Quadra, British Columbia (stays Liberal); Willowdale, Ontario (stays Liberal); Toronto Centre, Ontario (stays Liberal); and, Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Saskatchewan (Conservatives take from Liberals) |
| July 30     | During a speech delivered to Conservative party members in Quebec, Stephen Harper challenges Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion to “fish or cut bait” on his threats of forcing a fall election.                                                |
| October 14  | Canada’s 40 <sup>th</sup> General Election: Another Conservative government with 143 seats                                                                                                                                                |

## Appendix N

### Key Votes – Harper (1)

| DATE          | VOTE<br>RESPECTING                                                   | SPONSOR                 | YEAS                                 | NAYS                                           | RESULT    |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| May 8, 2006   | <b>Vote No. 1</b><br><br>Budgetary<br>Policy<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.   | Wasylycia-Leis<br>(NDP) | 28<br><br>NDP 28                     | 258<br><br>CPC 123<br>LIB 85<br>BQ 49<br>IND 1 | Negated   |
| May 9, 2006   | <b>Vote No. 5</b><br><br>Budgetary<br>Policy<br><br>Amdt.            | McCallum (LIB)          | 116<br><br>LIB 89<br>NDP 27          | 174<br><br>CPC 123<br>BQ 51                    | Negated   |
| May 10, 2006  | <b>Vote No. 6</b><br><br>Budgetary<br>Policy                         | Flaherty (CPC)          | 175<br><br>CPC 124<br>BQ 51          | 113<br><br>LIB 85<br>NDP 28                    | Agreed To |
| Mar. 21, 2007 | <b>Vote No. 130</b><br><br>Budgetary<br>Policy<br><br>Amdt. to amdt. | Wasylycia-Leis<br>(NDP) | 29<br><br>NDP 29                     | 274<br><br>CPC 124<br>LIB 99<br>BQ 50<br>IND 1 | Negated   |
| Mar. 26, 2007 | <b>Vote No. 138</b><br><br>Budgetary<br>Policy<br><br>Amdt.          | McCallum (LIB)          | 109<br><br>LIB 84<br>NDP 25          | 175<br><br>CPC 125<br>BQ 49<br>IND 1           | Negated   |
| Mar. 27, 2007 | <b>Vote No. 139</b><br><br>Budgetary<br>Policy                       | Flaherty (CPC)          | 176<br><br>CPC 125<br>BQ 50<br>IND 1 | 119<br><br>LIB 91<br>NDP 28                    | Agreed To |
| XXXXXXXX      | XXXXXXXX                                                             | XXXXXXXX                | XXXXXXXX                             | XXXXXXXX                                       | XXXXXXXX  |

|               |                                                                   |                |                                              |                                                 |           |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Oct.18, 2007  | <b>Vote No. 1</b><br><br>Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.   | Duceppe (BQ)   | 48<br><br>BQ 48                              | 240<br><br>CPC 125<br>LIB 83<br>NDP 30<br>IND 2 | Negated   |
| Oct. 22, 2007 | <b>Vote No. 2</b><br><br>Address in Reply<br><br>Amdt.            | Dion (LIB)     | 89<br><br>LIB 89                             | 203<br><br>CPC 125<br>BQ 47<br>NDP 29<br>IND 2  | Negated   |
| Oct. 24, 2007 | <b>Vote No. 3</b><br><br>Address in Reply                         | Manning (CPC)  | 126<br><br>CPC 124<br>IND 2                  | 79<br><br>BQ 49<br>NDP 29<br>IND 1              | Agreed To |
| Oct. 31, 2007 | <b>Vote No. 7</b><br><br>Ways and Means motion No. 3              | Flaherty (CPC) | 127<br><br>CPC 125<br>IND 2                  | 76<br><br>BQ 47<br>NDP 28<br>IND 1              | Agreed To |
| Feb. 28, 2008 | <b>Vote No. 43</b><br><br>Budgetary Policy<br><br>Amdt. to amdt.  | Crête (BQ)     | 45<br><br>BQ 45                              | 230<br><br>CPC 122<br>LIB 80<br>NDP 28          | Negated   |
| Mar. 3, 2008  | <b>Vote No. 44</b><br><br>Budgetary Policy<br><br>Amdt.           | McCallum (LIB) | 7<br><br>LIB 7                               | 202<br><br>CPC 125<br>BQ 47<br>NDP 29<br>IND 1  | Negated   |
| Mar. 4, 2008  | <b>Vote No. 47</b><br><br>Budgetary Policy                        | Flaherty (CPC) | 125<br><br>CPC 124<br>IND 1                  | 90<br><br>BQ 48<br>NDP 30<br>LIB 11<br>IND 1    | Agreed To |
| Mar. 10, 2008 | <b>Vote No. 62</b><br><br>Opposition Motion<br><br>Climate change | Layton (NDP)   | 84<br><br>BQ 48<br>NDP 30<br>LIB 10<br>IND 1 | 121<br><br>CPC 121                              | Negated   |

|               |                                                                       |                |                                              |                                              |           |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Mar. 13, 2008 | <b>Vote No. 74</b><br><br>Ways and Means motion<br>No. 10             | Flaherty (CPC) | 124<br><br>CPC 123<br>IND 1                  | 87<br><br>BQ 46<br>NDP 29<br>LIB 11<br>IND 1 | Agreed To |
| April 2, 2008 | <b>Vote No. 79</b><br><br>Opposition Motion<br><br>Corporate tax cuts | Layton (NDP)   | 63<br><br>BQ 34<br>NDP 28<br>IND 1           | 198<br><br>CPC 115<br>LIB 81<br>IND 2        | Negated   |
| May 12, 2008  | <b>Vote No. 109</b><br><br>Opposition Motion<br><br>Economic policy   | Martin (NDP)   | 89<br><br>BQ 40<br>NDP 27<br>LIB 20<br>IND 2 | 109<br><br>CPC 109                           | Negated   |

## **Appendix O**

### **Government Bills (1) – Harper (1)**

**The following is a list of the government bills passed by the Harper Government from 2006 to 2008.**

#### **First Session**

- C-2 Federal Accountability Act
- C-3 International Bridges and Tunnels Bill
- C-4 Elections Canada Act Mandatory Review
- C-5 Public Health Agency of Canada Bill
- C-8 Money for the Public Service of Canada
- C-9 Conditional Sentencing Bill
- C-11 Transportation and Railway Safety Act
- C-12 Emergency Management Bill
- C-13 Budget Implementation Bill
- C-14 Adoption Bill
- C-15 Agricultural Marketing Programs Act
- C-16 Fixed Election Date Bill
- C-17 Judges' Salary and Benefits Bill
- C-18 DNA Identification Bill
- C-19 Street Racing Bill
- C-24 Softwood Lumber Bill
- C-25 Proceeds of Crime and Terrorist Financing Act Bill
- C-26 Pay Day Loans Bill
- C-28 Second Budget Implementation Act
- C-31 Voter Identification Bill
- C-34 First Nations Education in B.C. Bill
- C-37 Financial Institutions Bill
- C-38 Supplementary Estimates Implementation Bill
- C-39 Second Supplementary Estimates Implementation Bill
- C-40 Air Travelers Security Charge Act
- C-42 Amending the Quarantine Act
- C-46 Railway Back to Work Bill
- C-47 2010 Olympic Games Trademark Bill
- C-48 UN Anti-Corruption Bill
- C-49 2006-2007 Supplementary Estimates Bill
- C-50 2007-2008 Main Estimates Bill
- C-52 Budget Implementation Bill

- C-59 Unauthorized Recording of a Movie Bill
- C-60 Main Estimates
- C-61 Red Cross Society Trademark Bill

## **Second Session**

- C-2 Tackling Violent Crime Act
- C-3 Security Certificate and Special Advocate Bill
- C-8 Railway Transportation Bill
- C-9 Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States Bill
- C-11 Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement Bill
- C-12 Wage Earner Protection Bill
- C-13 Criminal Procedure, Language of the Accused Bill
- C-15 Exploitation of the Donkin Coal Block Bill
- C-18 Verification of Residence Bill
- C-21 First Nations Human Rights Bill
- C-23 Canada Marine Act
- C-28 Budget Implementation Bill
- C-30 First Nations Claim Tribunal Bill
- C-31 Increasing Judicial Salaries Bill
- C-33 Canadian Environmental Protection Act Amendments
- C-34 Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement Bill
- C-35 Supplementary Estimates Implementation Bill
- C-37 Citizenship Act Amendments Bill
- C-38 Operation of the National Research Universal Reactor at Chalk River Bill
- C-40 Job Protection for Reservists Bill
- C-41 Community Development Trust Bill
- C-42 Museums Act Bill
- C-44 An Act to amend the Agriculture Marketing Programs Act Bill
- C-48 2007-2008 Supplementary Estimates Bill
- C-49 2008-2009 Main Estimates Bill
- C-50 2008-2009 Budget Implementation Bill
- C-58 2008-2009 Main Estimates Bill
- C-59 2008-2009 Supplementary Estimates (A) Bill
- C-60 Court Martial Bill

## **Appendix P**

### **Government Bills (2) – Harper (1)**

**The following is a list of the government bills that died on the Order Paper.**

#### **First Session**

- C-6 Aviation Safety Bill
- C-7 Military Justice Bill
- C-10 Minimum Sentences for Firearms Crimes Bill
- C-20 Airports and Transportation Appeal Tribunal Bill
- C-21 Firearms Centre and Gun Registry Bill
- C-22 Age of Sexual Protection Bill
- C-23 Criminal Procedure Bill
- C-27 Repeat Offenders Bill
- C-29 Air Canada Public Participation Act
- C-30 Clean Air Act
- C-32 Impaired Driving Bill
- C-33 Income Tax Bill
- C-35 Reverse Onus Bail Hearings Bill
- C-41 Competition Act
- C-43 Senate Elections Bill
- C-44 First Nations Human Rights Bill
- C-45 Seacoast and Inland Fisheries Sustainable Development Bill
- C-51 Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement Bill
- C-53 Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States Convention Bill
- C-54 Loan Accountability Bill
- C-55 Extra Advanced Voting Days Bill
- C-56 Expanding House Seats Bill
- C-57 Foreign Nationals Working in Canada Bill
- C-58 Railway Transportation Bill
- C-62 Wage Earner Protection Program Bill
- C-63 Compensation for Nuclear Damage Bill
- C-64 Pilotage Bill

## Second Session

- C-4 Pilotage Act
- C-5 Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage in Case of a Nuclear Incident Bill
- C-6 Visual Identification of Voters Bill
- C-7 Aeronautics Act
- C-10 Canadian Film Tax Credits Bill
- C-14 Canada Post Corporation Bill
- C-16 Expanded Voting Opportunities Bill
- C-17 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
- C-19 Senate Tenure Bill
- C-20 Senate Selection Bill
- C-22 Democratic Representation Bill
- C-24 Non-registration of Firearms Bill
- C-25 Youth Criminal Justice Act Bill
- C-26 Controlled Drugs and Substance Act Bill
- C-27 Identity Theft Bill
- C-29 Loan Accountability Bill
- C-32 Sustainable Development of Canada's Seacoast and Inland Fisheries Bill
- C-36 Air Canada Public Participation Act Amendments Bill
- C-39 Canada Grain Act Amendments Bill
- C-43 An Act to amend the Customs Act
- C-45 National Defence Act Amendments
- C-46 Canadian Wheat Board Bill
- C-47 Family Homes on First Nation Reserves
- C-51 Therapeutic Products Oversight Bill
- C-52 Safety of Consumer Products Bill
- C-53 Auto Theft and Trafficking in Property Obtained by Crime Bill
- C-54 Human Pathogens and Toxins Safety Bill
- C-55 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Trade Association Bill
- C-56 Transportation of Dangerous Goods Bill
- C-57 Election of Canadian Wheat Board Directors Bill
- C-61 Copyright Amendments Bill
- C-62 Not-for-profit Corporations Bill
- C-63 Indian Oil and Gas Bill