

**CANADA'S 41ST PARLIAMENT: HANSARD, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
PUBLIC SERVANTS, AND COST SAVINGS**

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ABSTRACT

In acknowledging that the Hansard Oral Question Period records did not focus on the increasing personnel expenditures, this thesis will seek to identify and analyze how political party members convey their support or opposition for these austerity measures, during the first session of the 41st Parliament Oral Question Period exchanges; in particular, how these exchanges are structured within the setting of parliamentary debate and for what purposes. Furthermore this thesis examines, how parliamentary exchanges relate to the five (5) debate purposes identified in the literature: (1) position claiming; (2) persuading; (3) negotiating; (4) agenda-setting; and, (5) opinion-building (Ilie, 2017), within the four (4) categories identified in the review of the Hansard records; that is: safety and security concerns, Canada's official language policies, regional cuts, and public service reductions in areas directly related to the Canadian Forces and Canadian Veterans.

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PREAMBLE: SELF REFLECTION

In addition to my post-graduate studies with the University of Ottawa, I also want to declare my role as a Government of Canada public servant, with the Department of Justice Canada. In 2007, I moved from Toronto to Ottawa for a contract position (through a placement agency) and I maintained this contract for approximately one (1) year. After several various contract positions in Ottawa, and after applying to a publicly advertised legal assistant position, completing an exam, an interview, reference checks, and language assessments, I started my “permanent” public service career in 2010 (that is to say, as a direct hire and not through a placement agency contract). This initial position in 2010, though officially the debut of my federal public service career, though considered a “term” position, with a clear start and end-date. By early 2011, I had obtained official “indeterminate” (permanent) status, which not only coordinates with the 2011 election and the majority Conservative government, but it is also the beginning of the timeframe examined by this thesis. Without a doubt, the election of a Conservative majority government, as well as the major overhauls to the public service, which included the elimination of thousands of public service jobs, impacted my early public service career and had lasting impacts on my career (and likely the careers of many other public servants). While a thesis on the proposed topic could easily devolve into a rant of personal biases and anecdotes, my aim will be to remain as politically impartial as possible.

To clarify, it is not only my aim, it is also because as a federal public servant, and as per the *Public Service Employment Act*, I am only permitted to engage in a political activity that does not impair, or is not perceived to impair, my ability to perform my duties in a politically impartial manner (*Public Service Employment Act*). The Department of Justice Canada also has

similar guides that codify my professional responsibilities and additional federal public service tools have been developed to assist me in examining the suitability of particular political activities. For clarification, a political activity is defined, under the *Public Service Employment Act*, as:

- carrying on any activity in support of, within or in opposition to a political party;
- carrying on any activity in support of or in opposition to a candidate before or during an election period; or
- seeking nomination as or being a candidate in an election before or during the election period.

Again, in light of the subject and content of my thesis, it is my opinion that it will be possible for my analysis to appear to verge on hidden assumptions or political bias for or against political parties. That said, I want to clarify that my role through this work will be to provide a coherent analysis that in no way impairs (or should be perceived to impair) my ability to perform my public service duties in a politically impartial manner. The work will be critical and it is my hope that this work will produce a critical analysis that is unfettered by political partiality and that my political impartiality can contribute to a body of literature that aims to explore austerity measures that impacted thousands of Canadians.

INTRODUCTION

Through an analysis of communications and exchanges produced in legislative assemblies, we can gain insight into how various political actors orchestrate their political performances. In studying these exchanges, we can analyze how legislators' political performances create divisions between themselves and their opponents, and the communications strategy and methods employed to convince the general public that their political worldviews are valid. These parliamentary records provide us with a platform through which we can examine particular perspectives for commonalities and trends that encapsulate how legislators portray themselves and/or their political messages. Within the broader notion of parliamentary debates, Ilie (2017) claims that they not only allow parliamentary actors to articulate issues, they also serve five (5) purposes: (1) position claiming; (2) persuading; (3) negotiating; (4) agenda-setting; and, (5) opinion-building. These purposes can be used to codify political actors' messages during debates and question periods. Canada's Parliamentary Oral Question Period exchanges are recorded in the Hansard records and allow researchers to examine how political actors use the debates to solve problems, establish a decision-making process, hold the government to account, and promote their own image (Ilie, 2017). Interrogating the political dynamics through which discourse justify or challenge approaches (Patterson, et al. 2017), we can examine specific themes used by legislators to convey messages and create and define group identity (Angouri and Wodak 2014; Fairclough 2000; Wodak 2012; Wodak and Angouri 2014).

During the parliamentary discussions before and after the Government of Canada's Budget 2012, and against the backdrop of various austerity measures involving the federal public service, the Hansard recordings provide us with an opportunity to understand how different political parties

used the Oral Question Period to construct the political performances that define their political worldviews. During this time, and through the 2012 Federal Budget, the Government of Canada sought to introduce austerity measures that would reduce overall public expenditures. There were several approaches adopted to reduce expenditures, with varying degrees of success (i.e. closing regional veteran offices, ending scientific research projects, cuts to marine safety, reducing program delivery, merging federal departments, and terminating the employment of thousands of federal public servants). While this thesis focuses on the austerity measures designed to terminate the employment of thousands of federal public servants, we should also be aware that the groundwork for these austerity measures began with the implementation of the “Public Service Renewal Action Plans”, in 2007 (Public Service Renewal, 2013). Following these action plans, federal departments were asked to propose strategies and measures where each department would continue to generate yearly savings of 5-10% (Clerk of the Privy Council, 2012).

Stemming from these initial reviews, and with the implementation of Budget 2012, the government officially announced that “federal employment will be reduced by about 19,200” (Budget 2012: 2012). Interestingly, and despite initially stating that federal public servants would be reduced by approximately 19,200, the overall size of the federal public service was reduced by nearly 26,000, which is almost 9,000 more than originally forecast (Treasury Board, 2014). While this discrepancy and the lack of cost savings is what drew my initial interest in examining the Oral Question Period exchanges, it was largely ignored throughout the Hansard Oral Question Period exchanges, analyzed as part of this thesis. My initial inquiry centred around the idea that parliamentary exchanges would outline expectations of immediate savings and then given the outcome of increasing personnel expenditures, parliamentary exchanges would move

away from discussions on savings and attempt to find new ways to justify the public service reductions. This did not happen and political party members did not really engage in significant exchanges regarding the nature of the cuts or the impacts on the public service (or even the value of the public service). It is still important for me to highlight that while this discrepancy in the number of federal public servant positions being eliminated became known during the period covered by this analysis, it did not generate the level, or the type, of attention that I would have originally anticipated when designing my thesis analysis. From the sample reviewed through this thesis, the discrepancy in the number of public servants was only raised by Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) when she noted that:

“...the Conservatives promised that their cuts to the public service would not affect the quality of services provided to the public. However, we know that this is not true. By 2016, 29,000 jobs will be eliminated, not 19,000, as they announced...” (Parliament of Canada, April 16, 2019).

In response, Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party) stated:

“...what that left-wing think tank has done, and the NDP, is combined what were temporary positions and assumed that we are reducing full-time positions, like the 8,000 census takers for the 2011 census. The fact is there are 19,200 positions being reduced. Of course, we are doing so on behalf of the taxpayer because we believe that we can deliver excellent quality services to Canadians for less at a more sustainable cost to the taxpayer. That is why this government is in office: because we care about the taxpayer,

we care about Canadians, we care about services, and we are not going to have a \$21 billion carbon tax.” (Parliament of Canada, April 16, 2013).

Since Ilie (2017) confirms that parliamentary question periods are often the “media highlight of the parliamentary agenda” it is noteworthy that this discrepancy did not garner more attention. However, the archetype of this exchange is a question/comment and then response model that is repeated throughout the Hansard Oral Question Period exchanges. These exchanges typically start with a “question” from an opposition political party; I use the term “question”, while acknowledging that the “question” also appears to act as an accusatory statement or critique directed at the governing political party. Ilie (2017) argues that parliamentary questions are not always aimed at obtaining answers from parliamentarians; instead, they are used to make the respondent uncomfortable and encourage them to respond in a manner that is unflattering. It is baiting governing political party members to respond in an unflattering manner that appears to be the strategy of opposition political party members. As demonstrated in the above exchange, the governing political party typically responds with a series of justifications and legitimizations of their actions and approaches, which may also include their own deflections, attacks, and accusatory statements. That is to say that the response from the governing political party appears to dismiss or deflect the question, more than providing parliamentarians with greater insight into the topic.

The question changed into an examination of how political party members convey their support or opposition for these austerity measures, during the first session of the 41st Parliament Oral Question Period exchanges; in particular, how these exchanges are structured within the setting

of parliamentary debate and for what purposes. More specifically, in the context of parliamentary debate purposes presented by Ilie (2017) there was a focus on examining : 1) Position Claiming (this was seen in some cases, mostly in the context of right versus wrong assertions); 2) Agenda-Setting (this was particularly noticed in responses from the governing political party , though also seen where opposition political parties outline the required next steps); 3) Opinion building (both opposition and governing political parties attempted to develop opinions through their exchanges, and we see this when most of the opposition political parties included a long intro to a very leading question); 4) Persuading (for parliamentary debate and exchanges, it was surprisingly less present and there was not so much an attempt to change minds, just a focus on presenting/arguing opinions, agendas or positioning); and, 5) Negotiating (again here, we see less of a tendency to negotiate, an exception would be when discussing the tragic loss of life and asking/persuading the government to reverse a decision to shut down a local rescue centre – though it could also be categorized as an opinion [keep it open] or setting an agenda for next steps). In the broader context of parliamentary debate these initial findings appear to be in line with assertions put forward by Proksch and Slapin (2014) who note that floor speeches are more about position claiming and sending messages to their own political party and the public. Proksch and Slapin (2014) also state that parliamentarians do not intend to actually convince their colleagues of the virtue of their position, nor to they anticipate their exchanges to inspire new policy/legislative actions.

With this framing in mind, and after reviewing the initial data set from the Oral Question Period, four (4) themes and groups emerged that are associated with terminating the employment of federal public servants. The first theme relates to safety and security concerns, which is

highlighted through the exchanges relating to the Coast Guard, Maritime Safety, and Canada Border Services. These exchanges focus almost exclusively on accusations from opposition political parties that highlight how austerity measures reducing the public service in these areas by consolidating operations will impair the safety of and endanger Canadians. The second theme addresses Canada's official language policies and how the reduction in the federal public service may impact the capacity of the public service to meet linguistic obligations and provide bilingual services. In particular, these exchanges focus on the closure of Quebec service centres and the amalgamation of French regional offices and/or bilingual offices, with those located in unilingual regions. A third theme emerges, related to regional cuts, particularly to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Service Canada and Employment Insurance centres. Opposition parties emphasize how regional cuts would result in reduced services for Canadians in particular regions and geographical locations that may not have provided support to the governing political party, during the last election. The fourth theme relates to public service reductions in areas directly related to the Canadian Forces and Canadian Veterans. When discussing the Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence cuts, opposition political parties often criticized the governing political party's commitment to Canadian Forces members and Canadian veterans.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The literature review will situate the discussions surrounding the Parliamentary Oral Question Period, by introducing public choice theory that tends to exaggerate the role of the private sector in savings related to public service delivery, alongside the concept of austerity that outlines the nature of public service delivery reductions. Following this, the literature review takes aim at the

role of self and other in the development of imagery, language and arguments that form worldviews. In order to position the uniqueness of parliament, the literature review also elaborates on how parliamentary debate develops performative communications. The theoretical framework and methodological approach outline how these concepts and the data collected through this thesis is analyzed and discussed. The Hansard Oral Question Period data is then further discussed through the four (4) distinct themes identified above (Security, Official Languages, Regional Cuts, and Military/Veterans). In conclusion, this thesis attempts to draw out the various aspects discussed through the literature review and presented through the Hansard Oral Question Period data to outline how performative elements are used by political actors to elicit responses from their counterparts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PUBLIC CHOICE THEORY

By way of background, Canada's 41st Parliament lasted from June 2, 2011 to August 2, 2015, and had two sessions. The first session began on June 2, 2011, and ended on September 13, 2013; and, it is this first session that is of particular interest to this thesis. While Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the number of public servants and the amounts spent in each fiscal year on personnel expenditures, it goes before and beyond this time period, to provide additional context regarding the relationship between the number of public servants and personnel costs.

Table 1 – Personnel Expenditures and Number of Public Servants (fiscal years 2008/2009 to 2014/2015)¹

Fiscal Year	Personnel Expenditures	Number of Public Servants
2008/2009	\$35,593,402,000	274,370
2009/2010	\$41,009,240,000	282,955
2010/2011	\$42,297,102,000	282,352
2011/2012	\$43,837,637,000	278,092
2012/2013	\$46,133,475,000	262,817
2013/2014	\$44,993,653,000	257,138
2014/2015	\$43,810,483,000	257,034

The austerity measures intended to reduce overall expenditures and result in cost savings and Table 1 demonstrates the reductions in the number of public servants and confirms that during the first session of the 41st Parliament overall personnel expenditures continued to increase until the last two (2) years of the 41st Parliament. At interest is the concept of public choice theory that would suggest a contrary result, that is where the number of public servants decreases, the Government of Canada personnel expenditures would also decrease in tandem. It is important to contextualize the nature of cuts to public sector organizations. When discussing public sector organizations, common sense assumptions are often directed towards the theory that emphasized cuts to public servant employment, as a means to reducing public expenditures; while there is an entire body of literature dedicated to describing how shifting service delivery models away from public servants will reduce government expenditures and create efficiencies, particularly through the adoption of alternative/private service delivery models, there is an equally impressive body of literature that challenges the foundation of these Public Choice Theories (Bel, Fageda, and

¹ See: Public Works and Government Services Canada (<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/index-eng.html>) and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (<http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/psm-fpfm/modernizing-modernisation/stats/ssen-ane-eng.asp>).

Warner, 2010; Boyne, 1998; Domberger and Jensen, 1997; Hefetz and Warner, 2004; Warner, and Hefetz, 2008; Warner, 2008; Hirsh, 1995; McMaster & Sawkins, 1996; Poister, Pasha, and Hamilton-Edwards, 2013; Rho, E., 2013). One major assumption of these theories is that increasing the government's usage of contracts and private sector service delivery models is efficient and can justify reductions in the public service (Klijn, 2002; Milward and Provan, 2000). These theories assume that by reducing the number of public servants governments can proportionally reduce overall personnel expenditures (almost in a rationalized oversimplification of cause and effect); this is presented in such a simple and logical manner, as if the process takes place in a vacuum void of any other contributing factors (not to mention, pensions, union involvement, etcetera); the second assumption would be that public servants are not as efficient as private sector counterparts; here again the presentation of this assumption is oversimplified and reduces the idea of efficiency into another kind of vacuum (one that ignores the values of public service and that lacks tangible constructs that are not based on the production of profits) (Bel, Fageda, and Warner, 2010; Boyne, 1998; Domberger and Jensen, 1997; Hefetz and Warner, 2004; Warner, and Hefetz, 2008; Warner, 2008; Hirsh, 1995; McMaster & Sawkins, 1996; Poister, Pasha, and Hamilton-Edwards, 2013; Rho, E., 2013).

Since this thesis will evaluate communications and exchanges that both attack and defend terminating the employment of approximately 26,000 public servants, it is important to review the public choice theories and their common sense assumptions, since these assumptions are often reproduced when legislators present their worldviews. Political actors that respond during the Parliamentary Oral Question Period using references to efficiencies and responsible management of resources, highlight these assumptions. The persistence of these worldviews and

the basis of a public management theory on making cuts to government spending is also tied to discussions of austerity measures and austerity policy, and in particular the political nature of these apparatuses.

AUSTERITY

As a concept, austerity is generally understood as a series of measures, typically involving financial reductions that are justified through fiscal necessity or prudence; however, Ross and Savage (2014) go further and describe modern austerity measures as a series of political actions in service to the wealthy and those who partner or have vested interests in ensuring the continuation of benefits for the upper classes. In the context of austerity benefiting the wealthy, the ideas presented by Smith (1993), where the relationship between text, ruling apparatuses that organize social life, and institutions develop into a means of control, the communications and exchanges examined during this study can provide additional insight into different socio-political constructs and how each is used to reinforce a particular system of control. Smith (1993) also leads us to understand that the role of parliament would be particularly interesting to examine, since, in this case, it would be an institution where national rules are created. In discussions surrounding the notion of austerity, Blyth (2013) notes that cutting the state's budget is intended to promote growth; that is, "austerity is a form of voluntary deflation in which the economy adjusts through the reduction of wages, prices and public spending to restore competitiveness." Through the lens of austerity, it is assumed that cutting public spending will restore "business confidence" and reduce any potential for the state to "crowd out" private interests (Blyth, 2013).

The fallacy of austerity, which has already been highlighted through discussions of public choice theory, is also further noted when Blyth (2013) highlights that reducing wages, prices, and government spending does not reduce debt and does not promote growth (Bel, Fageda, and Warner, 2010; Boyne, 1998; Domberger and Jensen, 1997; Hefetz and Warner, 2004; Warner, and Hefetz, 2008; Warner, 2008; Hirsh, 1995; McMaster & Sawkins, 1996; Poister, Pasha, and Hamilton-Edwards, 2013; Rho, E., 2013). One example, discussed throughout his work, is the 2007/2008 financial crisis, which he alleges was often portrayed as a government debt crisis, when it was actually a banking crisis that resulted in governments providing bailouts to financial institutions (Blyth, 2013). To further Blyth's (2013) analysis, it is because austerity policy is simple, intuitive, and makes sense; that is, the notion that debt cannot be reduced by incurring more debt and instead it is required asserted that in order to eliminate debt one must reduce spending. This concept is countered by Blyth (2013) when he notes that we cannot incur cuts and then expect to experience growth; in fact these cuts will impact different segments of society disproportionately and may result in unforeseen negative consequences. Blyth (2013) also acknowledges that significant government debt can have negative consequences, he confirms that austerity policies are detrimental because: 1) it does not work in practice; 2) it requires the poor/average classes to pay for the rich (think again to financial institution bailouts); and, 3) it rests on a fallacy (we cannot all reduce and simultaneously stimulate investment).

Using the above conceptualization of austerity measures and public choice theory, an examination of the Parliamentary Question Period exchanges requires an analysis of the modes of simplification used by political actors. In particular, there is a need to examine how political actors present information related to austerity measures and how questions and answers

surrounding the reduction of thousands of public sector positions feeds into (or is made comprehensible because of) the simplified notions of austerity and public choice theory. Again, Smith (1993) leads us to understand that the role that a parliamentary governing body assumes is important because the rules are made within these particular institutions. Parliamentary communications and exchanges that address the drastic staffing actions do appear to adhere to and uphold strict political party worldviews. Since these communications and exchanges continue to adhere to political party worldviews and continue to shift towards common sense assumptions and representations, it is clear that the adherence to discussions surrounding austerity and public choice theory are evidence of a closer link to political party structures and worldviews than to actual results (such as actually reducing debt or encouraging economic growth). While not within the scope of this thesis, it also begs the question as to why political actors would continue to adhere to a worldview or austerity policies that do not appear to be resulting in the outcome that they claim to be seeking. Whenever there is a discussion surrounding the concept of austerity and the purpose behind austerity, I am drawn to the idea of class struggles and class representation.

Turner and Brownhill (2001) characterize this as a gendered class struggle to channel and exploit unpaid (and arguably low-paid) work through political designates who form a “male deal” with capitalistic forces. These male dealers or political designates accept their own subordination to capitalistic forces in exchange for the power they are able to wield through their exploitation of the unpaid and/or underpaid (Turner and Brownhill, 2001). In discussing this gendered class struggle, Turner and Brownhill (2001) do not underestimate the power that is exercised by the “gendered class alliance”, which challenge this exploitation and seek alternatives to the

capitalistic system that would exploit unpaid or underpaid work. Angela Miles (2001) also highlights that the system aims to concentrate wealth and that it is these select few that are able to exercise power, and that these powerful capitalists submit that labourers only have value when labour contributes to capitalistic profits. In terms of this thesis and the employment of thousands of public servants, it is recognized that we are not dealing with unpaid labour that is exploited by political designates, though we are examining labour that does not generate tangible profits for select number of capitalists.

Throughout this thesis, we will see that political actors may not always directly question the value of the work, though the governing political party will often raise issues regarding the public service's efficiency and efficacy. By building upon the framework presented by Turner and Brownhill (2001) and Miles (2001), we could conceptualize the austerity measures, which failed to result in significantly lowered personnel expenditures, in terms of a "male deal" that is being exercised by the in-power political designates to satisfy capitalistic insistence on increased profitability. That being said, it has already been noted that viewing the public service under the same profitability viewpoint used for corporations does not necessarily translate into good public policy (Bel, Fageda, and Warner, 2010; Boyne, 1998; Domberger and Jensen, 1997; Hefetz and Warner, 2004; Warner, and Hefetz, 2008; Warner, 2008; Hirsh, 1995; McMaster & Sawkins, 1996; Poister, Pasha, and Hamilton-Edwards, 2013; Rho, E., 2013).

SELF AND OTHERS: GROUP DEFINING

Through the lenses of austerity, public choice theory, as well as the ideological and brokerage political party models, actors are developing clear definitions of groups that relate to the 'self'

and those relate to 'others'. This dichotomy between 'self' and 'others' is central to this analysis since the dichotomy is molded through the communications and exchanges because these communications and exchanges can be used to situate blame, create binaries, and act as both collective and individualistic dichotomies (Alexander 2010; Angouri and Wodak 2014; Wodak 2012; Wodak and Angouri 2014). Political actors can use their communications and exchanges to situate blame and make sense of complex events; in addition, politically-driven communications and exchanges can be used to construct facts that explain events, then allow actors to allocate and deny blame, create binary groups (e.g. victims vs. perpetrators, heroes vs. villains), and negotiate excuses (Angouri and Wodak 2014; Wodak 2012; Wodak and Angouri 2014). The creation of binary relationships facilitates political actors to issue blame and negotiate responsibility (Wodak and Angouri 2014); Alexander (2010) describes the political pursuit of the sunny side of the street and how political actors are always striving to be portrayed as on the sunny side of the street, while relegating their opposition to the shadowy side. Sobieraj (2011) notes that while current discourse already discusses the creation of boundaries, social solidarity, ethics, community visions and political visions, the fact that the nature of these relationships are not stationary is not often examined; that is, there is less of an emphasis on the malleable nature of these boundaries. Keeping in mind a concept of moving boundaries, and when examining Parliamentary Question Period exchanges, political actors attempt to dismiss questions that could cast an unfavourable view on their political party's decisions, policies, or actions, and these dismissals could be viewed as an attempt to reinforce the rigidity of these boundaries. These exchanges are then used to further underscore the line between political actors that belong to different political parties and in some cases creates a very clearly defined adversarial relationship between the different political party members.

LANGUAGE, IMAGERY, ARGUMENTS AND STRATEGIES FOR GOVERNANCE

An understanding of the worldviews and perceptions that political party members have towards the austerity measures that affected the employment and careers of thousands federal public servants is essential to this analysis. The language and imagery that they use to define a positive “self” and an adversarial “other” provides insight into the differing perceptions of legislators and their political parties. This thesis undertakes an examination of the structures of communications and exchanges that are used to present, justify and oppose Canada’s 41st Parliament’s austerity measures through a lens of political party worldviews. Mio (1997) discusses how metaphors are used to simplify messages and Howe (1988) talks about metaphors in politics as a means to invoke images from everyday life (how sports and war are often invoked when politicians in the United States wanted to convey messages and relate to constituents).

Canada’s legislators are no different than their American political counterparts when employing images to convey their disdain for or their justifications for austerity policies. This thesis examines what imagery, anecdotes, sound-bites, and/or metaphors are presented by legislators from varying political parties (sports, safety, middle-class, responsibility, battles, war, destructive elements, and etcetera). These elements were already noted in the exchanges between Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) and Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party). The response from Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party) included references to “left-wing think tank”, the work “...on behalf of the taxpayers” and notions unrelated to the number of public servant positions being eliminated, such as a “\$21 billion carbon tax” (Parliament of Canada, April 16, 2013). ...

WORLDVIEW AND PROTOTYPES

When examining austerity measures and public choice theories the concept of worldviews, common sense assumptions and prototypes/representations it is often assumed that some are inherent, such as ideas of the left, taxpayers and taxes for environmental purposes. In introducing the concepts of worldviews and prototypes, Lakoff (2016) presents an analogy from a news publication where an overspending mother represents an overindulgent government with impractical goals and spending habits; in the first example the description relates to how an impractical and overspending mother can be compared to a government's own spending habits and that we can draw on the negative aspects that are already understood within a household economics context and then attempt to extrapolate the household economics to a government overspending context; while he admits that most readers would be able to understand these comparisons, and that some may even tend to agree with them, he suggests that, even in recognizing and relating to the comparisons, the interpretation is based on a particular worldview. These political worldviews and common sense interpretations of statements need to be challenged and not blindly accepted as fact (Lakoff, 2016). That is, we are not to simply accept an analogy because we are able to recognize and relate to the comparisons, we need to instead examine the representations and worldviews hidden behind the analogy. Lakoff (2016) continues his analysis and argues that other political worldviews could use other comparisons to present a very different story, where an overspending single mother found herself in this overspending predicament because of a well-off, yet financially absent father/husband figure. In this context it is easy to draw different conclusions where an absent father/husband figure is compared to well-off citizens who do not proportionally contribute taxes to their government. This constructs returns to the analysis outlined by Blythe (2013) regarding the failures of austerity policy; that is, a worldview can make these policies palatable and easily understood by

constituents. However, the ease of understanding and digestibility of a policy does not confirm its ability to produce the intended results.

To better understand how political worldviews are constructed and analyzed by political actors, Lakoff (2016) outlines how prototypes can be used as an element to represent the category as a whole, within some kind of logical reasoning. The first category would be the “typical case” which is used to draw inferences of category members, as a whole; the second would be the “central subcategory” which is used to extend the category and define variations within the category; the “ideal case” acts as a standard against which others within the category are measured and assessed; the “anti-ideal case” exemplifies the worst case scenario within the category; the fifth prototype would be the “stereotype” which is a well-known construct within the category that allows individuals to make judgements regarding the category without engaging in much debate or thought; the “salient exemplar” is an unforgettable example that is used to make judgements of typical category members; and, the last prototype would be the “essential” which is a hypothetical collection of attributes that are attributed to the definition of the category (Lakoff, 2016). With the issues and analytical tools presented by Lakoff (2016), this thesis will need to be aware of how political worldviews can influence the nature of analysis and determine how a particular issue is examined.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

In addition to analyzing the worldviews and common sense statements, we need to place these actions in the context of performative communications and exchanges and it also needs to be acknowledged that the performance of politics involves the creation of symbolic boundaries in place of material boundaries that result in struggles over representation which creates binary and

oversimplified relationships; these binary relationships result in the creation of opposing concepts that can then structure opposing political performances (Alexander 2010; Angouri and Wodak 2014; Wodak 2012; Wodak and Angouri 2014). Alexander (2010) highlights the role between constative statements (descriptions referring to something in the real world) and performative statements (referring to a generally accepted or assumed fact) in the creation of this binary relationship. It is also recognized that these binary performative statements are closely linked to the analysis presented by Lakoff (2016) and noted by Blythe (2013), though Alexander (2010) outlines a performative based analysis to the relatability of the political actors to their audience; this can only become possible if the performance is believable, relatable, and finally accepted by the general public (Alexander, 2010).

Fairclough (2006) discusses several methods that political actors use to ensure that their performances are relatable and believable to their audiences; interchanging between the first person plural (“we”) and the first person singular (“I”) can be used by political actors to relate to audiences and establish a familiarity or group consensus with the audience; then using predictable pre-constructed phrases and general lexicon can also link these political actors to their audiences by making their messages more relatable and common place; and, finally, political actors can interchange between informal references and formal references, to refer to the same subject and to create a familiar formality with their audience (i.e. using words such as “sons” and “boys”, to interchangeably refer to the same subject and allows the speaker to create a more relatable message). Using informal references and general phrases to develop political worldviews and relatability with the audience also link to Alexander (2010) and Lakoff’s (2016)

discussions on the usage of performative statements and drawing on the perceived common sense of a particular audience.

During Parliamentary Question Periods, and while reading the Hansard records, it becomes clear that there are performances being acted out. For example, the Hansard records clearly indicate when groups of Members of Parliament interrupting other Members of Parliament during comments or responses. It is assumed that these interruptions are performed by members of a particular political party, against a member of another political party and that they are used to further enhance the existing dichotomy between the two (2) groups of political actors. These performances can also be recognized in the structure and style of the Members of Parliament's responses to one another's' questions; that is, and while only reading these responses, it is possible to infer tone and dismissive intent. Ilie (2016) notes that parliamentary debates have seen an increased level of visibility and accessibility (to the media and the general public) and that this visibility has increased the presence of "various ideological visions, party affiliations, institutional positions and political agendas"; that is, these debates and statements within parliament are no longer exclusively intended to persuade parliamentarians and have a broader impact. This multi-layered audience is further described by Ilie (2017) when it is noted that political actors are now aware they are acting for these layers of audiences when they are engaging in parliamentary debates. Proksch and Slapin (2014) assert that parliamentary exchanges should not only be viewed as an attempt to win debates or further policy/legislative development; instead, these exchanges are not only performative means to portray ideas to the public, they also attempt to influence their own political party and that they focus mainly on position taking, instead of policy/legislative development. This concept of speaking to one's own

political party is thought to be a result of the political party's own control over parliamentary exchanges, which could include who speaks when and on what subject (Proksch and Slapin, 2014). That being said, while Ilie (2016 and 2017) highlights the notion that parliamentarians have a fundamental role to perform in decision making and weighing the various options before finalizing a decision (an notion of deliberative democracy), and while Proksch and Slapin (2014) acknowledge this general perception (or even the intended purpose) of parliamentary exchanges, it is also noted that this is not always the intent. Proksch and Slapin (2014) go on to state that parliamentarians do not often engage in parliamentary exchanges to raise new policy/legislative approaches and in some instances they may not even expect a productive debate, instead the intent is this messaging to their political party and the voters.

While Proksch and Slapin (2014) did not specifically examine Canadian parliament, there are some notes that can be made on their more general comments about parliamentary exchanges, in the context of this thesis and Canadian Parliament. When Proksch and Slapin (2014) cautioned using parliamentary exchanges as a data set, their intention appears to be in relation to measuring ideological positions of political parties. For this point, and since this thesis is not only interested in the ideological positions, but rather how political party members convey their support or opposition for these austerity measures, during the first session of the 41st Parliament Oral Question Period exchanges; in particular, how these exchanges are structured within the setting of parliamentary debate and for what purposes.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND QUESTION

RESEARCH PROBLEM

This thesis examines the House of Commons Hansard, particularly the Hansard Oral Question Period records for the first session of Canada's 41st Parliament, with a specific focus on the implementation of austerity measures that reduced public service personnel and effected the employment and careers of thousands of public servants. As already noted, and while there is not a significant series of exchanges regarding the actual reduction, there are extensive discussions regarding the impact of terminating the employment of federal public servants, as it relates to specific sections of the public service (safety and security, official languages, regional operations, as well as Canadian Forces and veterans). By examining the communications and exchanges related to these austerity measures directed towards the public service, this thesis attempts to form insight into how political actors produce and structure communications and exchanges to present ideas, common sense assumptions, and general representations that construct a justification of their political position. In addition, this thesis will contribute to the body of Canadian empirical research related to parliamentary discourse/debate. This analysis will not seek to solve policy issues nor will it seek to criticize or provide solutions for future political approaches, instead it will remain focused on the nature, development, and the structure of the communications and exchanges (Stark, 1992) to provide insight into how politically motivated decisions are performed, presented, and ultimately justified/rationalized.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In acknowledging that the Hansard Oral Question Period records did not focus on the increasing personnel expenditures, this thesis will seek to identify and analyze how political party members

convey their support or opposition for these austerity measures, during the first session of the 41st Parliament Oral Question Period exchanges; in particular, how these exchanges are structured within the setting of parliamentary debate and for what purposes. In particular, how parliamentary exchanges relate to the five (5) debate purposes identified in the literature: (1) position claiming; (2) persuading; (3) negotiating; (4) agenda-setting; and, (5) opinion-building (Ilie, 2017), within the four (4) categories identified in the review of the Hansard records; that is: safety and security concerns, Canada's official language policies, regional cuts, and public service reductions in areas directly related to the Canadian Forces and Canadian Veterans

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After evaluating the austerity and public choice theories, what is fascinating about the decision to eliminate public servant positions is that these attempted reductions actually increased overall spending on personnel expenditures in the short term. As previously noted, this was my initial interest in the topic and it was contemplated that initial parliamentary communications and exchanges would indicate an expectation of immediate savings and then as time progressed, and given the perhaps unanticipated outcome of increasing personnel expenditures, legislators' communications and exchanges may move away from discussions on savings and attempt to find new ways to justify the implementation of austerity measures. Since this did not happen and since political party members did not engage in significant critiques of the governing political party's austerity measures, this thesis attempts to examine what types of communication strategies the proponents of austerity measures used to continue portraying a positive self, as well as how opponents presented their critiques of the austerity measures. How legislators

presented their political party messages and continued their political performances will be analyzed and compared.

In terms of group defining, this thesis will examine how the governing political party's actors deflect their own political party's responsibility and also how opposition political parties developed their own structures of blame. In broad terms, it is anticipated that parliamentary discourse can be labelled as either position claiming, persuading, negotiating, agenda-setting, and/or opinion building. How political actors structure their responses and what tools they use to craft their exchanges are anticipated to have common features and elements that are unique, depending on whether the discussion focuses on security, official languages, regional cuts, or military and veterans. When examining the imagery, it is likely that the oversimplification would compare these scenarios to other more familiar budget scenarios, similar to the household budget example presented by Lakoff (2016).

This examination will attempt to review the strategies used to define self and others, and what imageries are presented to defend or object to austerity and how do these differ, if at all, within the four (4) distinct themes identified above (Security, Official Languages, Regional Cuts, and Military/Veterans). Within the discussion of how parliamentary exchanges relate to the five (5) debate purposes identified in the literature: (1) position claiming; (2) persuading; (3) negotiating; (4) agenda-setting; and, (5) opinion-building (Ilie, 2017), this thesis will also examine what worldview and prototypes are deployed and what imagery is invoked, if any, and how these political performances are balanced within the Hansard Oral Question Period data.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data reviewed as part of this research is the Oral Question Period exchanges, of legislators recorded in the first session of Canada's 41st Parliament. Specifically, this research will examine communications and exchanges related to deficits, cuts, austerity measures, personnel, expenditures, and budget measures pertaining to federal public servants. To facilitate this research, I accessed recordings of for each legislator, which is already captured, translated, and transcribed in the Parliament of Canada's Hansard publications. For Canada's 41st Parliament, these transcriptions are divided into two sessions; the first session begins on June 2, 2011, and ends on September 13, 2013; the second session begins on October 16, 2013 and ends on August 2, 2015. In addition to already being transcribed, each entry is attributed to a particular individual legislator, whose riding and political party affiliation is clearly identified; independent legislators were also clearly identified as having no political party affiliation. Furthermore, the Hansard publications include a searchable feature which allows researchers to search specific topics of interest.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The first approach was to utilize the first session of Canada's 41st Parliament as a means of examining early responses to austerity measures. Not only was this a division that provided a logical starting point, since during the first session, from June 2, 2011, to September 13, 2013, it was suggested that even as the number of public servants decline, personnel expenditures continued to increase. This allows for a unique approach that allows for an examination of how legislators present communications, exchanges, performative political statements, and common sense assumptions, relating to the austerity measures with the financial information currently

available to them. That is, in the first session legislators will need to defend the results of their austerity actions and legislators will need to be precise in their communications, exchanges, performative political statements, and which common sense assumptions they use to illustrate their success.

After completing an initial inquiry, the following topics were identified (a total of 4243 entries):

*Public Service and Public Servants (1134); Deficit Reduction Action Plan (5); Personnel Attrition (9); Administrative Personnel (2); Closure of Government Operations and Facilities (1192); and, Layoffs and Job Losses (1901).*² After reviewing only Oral Question Period records

a total of 1,459 entries were identified. It was anticipated that there may be some communications and exchanges where Hansard provided a specific classification because the legislator mentioned a specific term, as opposed to only including communications and exchanges that are actively debating the topic. As an initial triage phase, I reviewed the exchanges and determined whether they were relevant to this thesis, outside the scope of this thesis, or duplicate records (those captured under several headings). Of the 1,459 relevant entries identified through this research, 555 entries were deemed to be relevant and are reviewed in detail and further analyzed through this thesis. That is to say that they were relevant to austerity measures and the reduction of the number of public servants.

The Hansard topic headings directed my analysis of the parliamentary communications and exchanges, and as expected many of the different topic headings overlapped with one another and some related to austerity measures that were not intended to be covered in under this analysis

² Parliament of Canada. 2016. Ottawa: Hansard Publication Search

(i.e. specific programs, reductions in grants and contributions, etc.). For instance, a number of discussions surrounding layoffs involved layoffs in the private sector that were being highlighted by parliamentarians; some examples include: AVEOS, Air Canada, and even regional specific manufacturing industries. In addition, there were a number of references to Crown Corporation cutbacks or proposed amendments to services (such as Canada Post's contemplated end of door-to-door services). In total 777 entries were determined to be irrelevant to this examination because the subject did not align with the terminating of public sector employees.

It was also understood that there was a possibility that a number of entries may have overlapping topic headings and that a single entry could be classified under more than one topic heading. One of the initial challenges was to ensure that I identified all of the duplicate or triplicate entries and documented these duplicates accordingly. This not only ensured less duplication when I was reviewing each entry, I also ensured that I was able to review the entries in a timely fashion. In total 127 duplicate entries were removed from additional consideration.

In terms of presenting the Hansard communications and exchanges, I intend to clearly identify the individual legislator who is providing the comment. These legislators will be identified by the name provided in the Hansard record, and will also be accompanied by a two (2) to three (3) letter political party identifier; the most common identifiers are: CPC (Conservative Party of Canada); NDP (New Democratic Party of Canada); LIB (Liberal Party of Canada); and, BQ (Bloc Quebecois). In addition to the name and political party identifier, it was determined that it would be useful to clearly identify whether the speaker is associated with the "governing political party" or an "opposition political party"; for clarification, the use of "opposition

political party” is not intended to cause confusion with other political terms, such as “official opposition party”.

FINDINGS - HANSARD ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS RELATED TO CUTS

As previously noted, the call and response nature of the Oral Question Period tends to follow a pattern of an opposition political party being critical of the governing political party, followed by a response from the governing political party that attempts to diminish the value of the critique, erode the validity of the critique, or even ignore the critique completely and focus on what could be considered to be pre-developed messaging. As one might expect, the exchanges are initiated by the opposition political parties (for the most part) and are often critical of the governing political party and request that the political party respond to actions, announcements, and decisions. In the context of this research, the opposition political parties often commence by questioning the governing political party for deciding to enact certain austerity measures (cuts to either offices, services, or public service positions). In addition, most of the questions, which act more like subversive accusations, imply that there is an inherent political culture of mismanagement or that the cuts are creating unsafe conditions for Canadians. In response to these questions, the governing political party typically responds in a manner that highlights how the cuts are actually improvements or how the cuts are required in the context of money management and fiscal responsibility. In other responses, one could almost sense the frustration being conveyed by the governing political party, often due to the repetitive nature of the question or because the same subject matter is questioned several times in one day (requiring the same Minister of the Crown, or his or her representative to respond repeatedly to the same question).

Again, this is not unexpected since Ilie (2017) has already established that parliamentary questions are not always aimed at obtaining answers from parliamentarians, instead they are used to make the respondent uncomfortable and appear in an unflattering manner. In some cases, it even appears that the response is intended to insult the opposition political party or the opposition Member of Parliament.

In examining these records and in delving into how political parties use language, images, worldviews, and communication style/performances, the exchanges focused primarily on the following larger subject matters. Often these broader subjects were recurring throughout the period examined in this thesis, and provide for a detailed analysis of legislators' communications, exchanges, performative political statements and common sense assumptions, in relation to the austerity measures that affected the employment and careers of thousands of Canadian public servants. The broader subjects include: Coast Guard and Maritime Safety; Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; Department of Fisheries and Oceans; Environment, Public Works, and Heritage; Service Canada and Employment Insurance; Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence; and the Canada Border Services Agency.

This communication strategy clearly illustrates how political actors are developing definitions of groups that relate to the 'self' and to 'others'. As anticipated after reviewing Angouri and Wodak 2014, Wodak 2012, Wodak and Angouri 2014, the political parties appear to be interested in establishing both a collective and individualistic definition of the political group and they use their communications and exchanges to situate, blame, and construct facts that are further used to create binary groups and negotiate excuses. As discussed by Alexander (2010), the Hansard

records appear to confirm that political parties are in a constant pursuit to be viewed as the sunny side of the street, while dismissing the other political parties to the shadowy side. The worldviews and prototypes discussed by Lakoff (2016) also appear throughout the question period exchanges and provide insight into each political party's particular worldview and common sense interpretations.

Some of the first question period records include an exchange between Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) and Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party), on June 6, 2011. While these exchanges relate to the broader concept of budget cuts and public service reductions, it was already becoming clear that there would be a defined style and pattern for subsequent question period exchanges. In her initial question, Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) poses a question that implies the governing political party is aiming to reduce the government's reliance on full-time permanent public servants. In her initial question, it is claimed that the governing political party “continues to shake the confidence of federal public servants” and the term “blind cuts” is used (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2011).

In response, Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party) confirms that while the government does use “temporary help” and that this help “...is crucial to ensure the delivery of services...” (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2011). As a follow-up question Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) then asks why the governing political party is “...ridding the public service of its best and brightest...” and if their intent for the National Capital Region (Ottawa/Gatineau) is “...precarious work, privatization, and cheap labour...” (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2011). In his final response, before these exchanges were concluded, Tony

Clement (CPC – governing political party) advised that his political party is proceeding “...in a prudent way and spending on things that Canadians care about...” (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2011).

From this interaction, which took place only four (4) days into the period examined by this thesis, it becomes clear that the language, images, worldviews, and communication style/performances that were discussed above emerged during question time. From the initial exchanges, we can see that the opposition political party is interested in criticizing the governing political party and that they will employ images and language that makes these attacks relatable to the general public. Using terms like “blind cuts” appears to imply that the austerity measures introduced are not well planned or thought through. The references to shaken confidences and losing skills from the public service workforce could be seen as an attempt to create common ground (both within her constituency and within her political party). In responding to these questions, the governing political party focused on how the use of “temporary help” is an improvement and allows the governing party to respond to the needs of Canadians. In the final response to this round of questioning the governing political party highlighted their role as Canada’s responsible/prudent financial managers.

These patterns continue to present themselves later in parliamentary discussions between Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) and Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party). In particular, Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) references “...staff cutbacks in many departments...” and suggests that “it appears that these cuts have been made arbitrarily and that the government is no longer even trying to justify its actions to Canadians” and adds that the

governing political party “...seems to be making things up as it goes along” (Parliament of Canada, June 15, 2011). In responding, Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party) confirms that the governing political party’s “...plans are on stream” and that they “...are looking at rationalizing some services” while “...also delivering those services to taxpayers in a better way” (Parliament of Canada, June 15, 2011). We will see that the opposition political parties are claiming that the cuts were made “arbitrarily” and that the opposition political parties will use questions that cast doubt on the justifications provided by the governing political party. As noted we can see here that the governing political party does not hesitate to continue to frame these austerity measures in reference to taxpayers and ensuring that services are “better” and rationalized. In both instances, the governing political party is also attempting to create common ground with constituents and political party members. In examining these records and in delving into how political parties use language, images, worldviews, and communication style/performances, the exchanges act as a call and response where both political actors attempt to position themselves as being in the positive light.

SECURITY

Canada Border Services Agency

In the context of safety and security, the Oral Question Period is concerned with a number of entries related to how cuts to the public service will influence the safety and security of Canadians. In general, these exchanges still follow the same general call and response model, while forcing legislators to present two distinct perspectives on the same issue. For instance, on October 2012, Brian Masse (NDP – opposition political party) claimed that:

“...instead of strengthening the border, increasing efficiency, the government decided to cut and slash border services to Canadians. It is cutting front-line border officer jobs, including 40 intelligence officers, and the detector dog programs. When we cut \$143 million from border services, we get thickening of the border, longer wait times and an open invitation for organized crime to enter and exist in Canada...” (Parliament of Canada, October 1, 2012).

In response to these claims, Vic Towes (CPC – governing political party) confirmed that his party “...has increased front-line border officers by 26%. We have taken steps to make the border faster and more efficient for law-abiding Canadians...” (Parliament of Canada, October 1, 2012). Here we have an opposition political party member claiming a position that the cuts to the public service are going to impact border operations and that this could enable organized crime to exploit Canadian borders. While the governing political party member is claiming the position that there have been increases to border personnel and that the borders are safe and speedy for “law-abiding Canadians”. The disconnect in this exchange emphasizes the two political positions (where the opposition political party claims that there were reductions of intelligence officers and the governing political party claims that there was an increase in the number of border officers; it is interesting to note that they appear to be discussing two different functions and roles within the border services [intelligence officers are likely not the same as border officers]). Through this exchange, we can see that both political parties are attempting to persuade their audience; the opposition political party highlighting cuts and is attempting to convince his audience that there is an increased risk to Canadians’ safety; while the governing political party highlights the investments and increased personnel to reassure the same audience that there are

sufficient investments in safety. Both the governing political party and the opposition political party are attempting to build a divergent opinion on the state of safety at Canadian borders. In addition to the opinion on safety, the governing political party builds an opinion that describes the benefits for “law-abiding Canadians”, which appears to imply that the only impacts on safety would be for unlawful Canadians. This is a separate opinion which is not developed further in relation to the Canada Border Services Agency, though it is notable as both an opinion and as an agenda setting item. While this discussion regarding border security and the cuts to the public service did not continue, nor did the exchanges appear to contribute to a well developed policy or legislative amendment, a similar discussion related to the safety of Canadians continued to unfold over the course of the first session of the 41st Parliament, in relation to safety and security in light of cuts to the Coast Guard.

Coast Guard and Marine Safety

As early as June 13, 2011, the opposition political parties begin to flag concerns in the Oral Question Period, regarding cuts and closures of Coast Guard rescue centres (particularly those located in BC, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Quebec). The opposition political parties began to question the availability of resources, and the provision of French language services (particularly with the closure of the Quebec centre). In describing these cuts/closures, Ryan Cleary (NDP – opposition political party) describes the closure of the Newfoundland rescue communication centre as “...senseless, reckless, hasty, and dangerous...” and asks if the governing political party will “...reverse this reckless decision” (Parliament of Canada, June 14, 2011). In posing these questions the opposition political party frames the austerity measures as something that is dangerous and reckless, as well as something that puts the lives of Canadians in danger.

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) states that there will be “...no negative impact...”, highlighting that this closure “...is due to technological advances and represents positive change...” and that “[s]afety and response time will not be affected” (Parliament of Canada, June 14, 2011). In a follow-up question, Ryan Cleary (NDP – opposition political party) provides a dismissive retort in stating that “...the minister has his speaking notes down pat” and that the governing political party has resources for “...corporate tax give-aways...” and refers to the governing political party’s austerity measures as “rash cuts” (Parliament of Canada, June 14, 2011). Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) then advises that the “...member opposite has his questions down pat as well” and advises that the austerity measures will have “...no impact on safety...” (Parliament of Canada, June 14, 2011). It is also interesting to note that two (2) other NDP – opposition political party legislators also questioned the same minister on the same subject, immediately following this exchange. This continuation of questions related to the same subject appears to create frustration in some of the subsequent responses; displayed when Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) advises that his political party “...indicated all along...” and later that “...[he] thought [he] was very clear in [his] answer to the previous question...” (Parliament of Canada, June 14, 2011).

In this exchange, it becomes clear that the opposition political party intends to use these questions as an opportunity to attack the governing political party and define their own position, which is to frame the proposed austerity measures as “reckless”. The ongoing nature and the approach taken by the opposition political party also takes on elements of persuasion and negotiation, where they are trying to convince an audience while simultaneously negotiating with

the governing political party to change their approach. The opposition political party's agenda, in this instance is to highlight the dangers and recklessness of the austerity measures. The reference to political party speaking notes or rehearsed sound bites also appears to be developing a kind of opinion of the governing political party that highlights the governing party's Ministers do not have full autonomy over their respective portfolios (in this instance marine safety). All-in-all, these exchanges appear to be an attempt to undermine the other legislator's individuality and to illicit images of insecurity. The opposition political party also referenced "corporate tax give-aways" instead of something more benign (such as: "corporate tax cuts"), which allows us to observe another opinion that the opposition political party is putting forward. That is, that the opinion of the opposition political party that the governing political party is more aligned with the interests of corporations than with the average Canadian and their safety.

When examining the responses from the governing political party it becomes clear that they appear to follow an established pattern of responding in a manner that highlights the improvements, particularly technological, while dismissing the critiques associated with any other critical elements relating to the austerity measures. That said, it does not contribute to an ideological discussion regarding the broader nature of austerity measures. The governing political party, through most of the exchanges, will perpetuate this position and they will adhere to this claim of modernization and savings, while attempting to persuade their audience that these austerity measures will not have any impact on marine safety. Almost immediately, the responses also appeared to include a certain element of frustration; particularly when Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) was asked about the same subject from a total of three (3) opposition political party members. This frustration is also replicated in similar

situations where the opposition political party is confronted with the same issues in rapid succession from opposition political parties (whether from the same opposition political party or a coordinated series of questions from several different opposition political parties).

The very next day after the above exchanges, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) and Scott Simms (LIB – opposition political party) posed related questions regarding the closure of maritime search and rescue centres. In both questions, the opposition political party legislators highlighted quotes from senior managers within the Canadian Coast Guard. In response to these questions, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) notes that the governing political party “...has been clear about finding efficiencies...” and that they “...are absolutely not putting the lives of Canadian at risk”; in addition, it was highlighted by Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) that the LIB – opposition political party “...decimated the Canadian Coast Guard through its neglect” and that the governing political party is making “...unprecedented investments” (Parliament of Canada, June 15, 2011). The next day, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) asked another question, which prompted a response from Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) that highlighted the governing political party’s investments (Parliament of Canada, June 16, 2011). Again, here we see that the typical call to alarm and response regarding efficiencies and savings is not followed in these exchanges. In these exchanges we see a slight deviation from the typical exchanges where the opposition political party uses information from non-political sources to support their position and to reinforce their opinions. In response, the governing political party maintains its justification that these measures based on savings and the development of efficiencies. In addition, the governing political party attacks the track record of a former governing political party and claiming that any

lack of safety was a result of their approach while acting as the governing party. The governing political party does this, while at the same time providing assurances that there are no risks to safety and security and while highlighting their own investments into marine safety.

Following these exchanges, on June 22 and 23, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) and Ryan Cleary (NDP – opposition political party) asked again if the austerity cuts are jeopardizing jobs and maritime safety. In responding, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that he “...indicated many times in answering questions, safety will not be compromised...” (Parliament of Canada, June 22, 2011) and that he has “...indicated on several occasions... in no way will compromise the safety of mariners...” (Parliament of Canada, June 23, 2011). Here we are presented with a scenario where opposition political parties are questioning the governing political party on the same issue (in this case similar questions being presented in a short period of time), which results in the governing political party presenting responses that appear to include elements of frustration or that reference the redundancy of the questions from the opposition political party. The opposition political party is developing a position that the cuts are impactful on marine safety and their opinion is developed by these exchanges. In this instance Keith Ashfield’s (CPC – governing political party) need to emphasize that he has already indicated “many times” or “several occasions” appears to suggest an element of frustration with the opposition political parties’ line of questioning. Following these questions, it does not appear that there were any additional exchanges and that Parliament stopped sitting until September 2011.

After Parliament resumed these questions resurfaced and, on September 28, 2011, Christine Moore (NDP – opposition political party) again asks “...why the St. John’s and Quebec City search and rescue centres are being closed...” (Parliament of Canada, September 28, 2011), to which Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) advises that these centres are being consolidated with the existing “Joint Rescue Coordination Centres” and that “...the consolidation represents a positive change...” (Parliament of Canada, September 28, 2011). Here we see the opposition political party again developing a position that the closures should not proceed and that there may be an element of persuasion or negotiation with the governing political party. However, in the governing political party’s response we do still see the position that its austerity measures as a “positive” endeavour and that their opinion remains that these closures should proceed.

In October, Lawrence MacAulay (Lib – opposition political party) asks about these closures and highlights that the governing political party is “...dealing with an essential service and human lives...” he asks if the governing political party will do “...the right thing and reverse this reckless decision...” (Parliament of Canada, October 6, 2011). In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) states that “...[he has] said many times, the consolidation represents a positive change...” (Parliament of Canada, October 6, 2011). A few moments later Stéphane Dion (Lib – opposition political party) responds by saying “...that the minister is being contradicted by his own officials...” and in reading a document he quotes “...senior team members...” who “...have expressed doubt and concerns about the success of closing MRSC Quebec et al...” (Parliament of Canada, October 6, 2011). In these exchanges we see a return to referencing experts and branding the austerity measures as “reckless”. We also see multiple

members of opposition political parties working together to critique the governing political party's approach in rapid succession, which may be an attempt to persuade or negotiate a new direction with the governing political party. Despite these attempts, it is not clear that the parliamentary exchanges are intended to move the governing political party towards a deliberative democratic discussion, instead focusing on critiquing the governing political party. Through all of these critiques, the governing political party still makes efforts to assert that these austerity measures are positive and represent efficiencies. It is this opinion and position that is repeated throughout the governing political party's responses and establishes a clear agenda of moving forward with the austerity measures.

Over a month later, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) once again reanimated this debate when she noted that the Minister refused to meet with stakeholders seeking to have the governing political party “...rescind its decision to close the centre [in St. John’s]...”. In responding, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that “...the member’s question has been addressed thoroughly...” and that “...the efficiency measures under way will maintain the present levels of marine safety and service...” (Parliament of Canada, November 22, 2011). Here again, we see the opposition political parties using the expertise of others (in this case stakeholders) and the governing political party responding in a manner that both expresses frustration at the repetitive nature of the question and reasserts the positive nature of the closures as “efficiency measures”. While this exchange was brief, it shows that both the governing political party and the opposition political party are claiming a position (for and against, respectively) regarding the austerity measures. While the opposition political party statements

appear to be persuasive or negotiatory in nature, the governing political party's response strikes more of a definitive and decisive nature.

Almost another month goes by when Dennis Bevington (NDP – opposition political party) questioned the governing political party's decision to "...shut down the Coast Guard office in Inuvik, the office for the Beaufort Sea and the western Arctic Ocean..." he further questions how the governing political party can "...say that it is a good financial manager when it makes decisions like this?" (Parliament of Canada, December 15, 2011). This is an attempt by the opposition political party to claim a position regarding the financial management of the governing political party. Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) later confirms that "...with today's technology, it will have no impact on the safety and the concerns of mariners..." (Parliament of Canada, December 15, 2011), which appears to be an attempt to claim their own position that the technological advances and efficiencies have no impact on the safety of mariners, while also attempting to build a consensus surrounding their own opinions on the subject.

In the new year, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) reinitiated her questions regarding the closure of the St. John's rescue centre and stated that the governing political party "...is speaking out of both sides of its mouth when it says it supports the sealing industry..." (Parliament of Canada, January 2, 2012). Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded to the opposition political party's position by stating that his political party "...is in full support of the sealing industry and the people who earn their livelihood from that industry..."; which prompted a follow-up question from Jack Harris (NDP – opposition political

party) that referred to the plans to close the St. John's rescue centre as "shameful", since the centre is "...vital to ensuring the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and all Canadians..." (Parliament of Canada, January 2, 2012). The opposition political parties continue to assert their position that the closures are dangerous, drawing in images of particular industries and stakeholders that will be impacted by the austerity measures that would close the St. John and Inuvik centres/offices.

In February, Scott Andrews (IND – opposition political party) stated that "...the employees at the marine communications and traffic services know their jobs..." then that "...the Coast Guard continues to be gutted..." and accused the governing political party of giving "...the order to cut key positions in marine communications and traffic services..." (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012). In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) announced that "...as usual the member opposite is entirely wrong..." and his response focused on "...the efficiencies being gained... allowing better use of overtime..." and "nationalizing" existing policies that "...save money and still protect mariners" (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012). Again, here it is clear that the opposition political parties are not letting-up on their attempts to claim the position that the closures are endangering the lives of Canadians, since these public servants know their jobs and are able to respond. The opposition political parties are also using terms like "gutted" and referring to the positions as "key", in what appears to be an effort to emphasize the importance of the resources that are being cut through the governing political party's austerity measures. The governing political party's response is a clear attempt to build the opinion that the opposition political parties are "entirely wrong" in their position claiming and insists that the technical efficiencies will result in ongoing safety, as well as cost savings.

A few days later, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) signalled to parliament that

“...it is with sadness that we must conclude that the search and rescue system failed 14-year old Burton Winters and his family in Makkovik. Both search and rescue aircraft that could have responded had mechanical problems...” (Parliament of Canada, February 9, 2012).

This opportunity was also used to ask whether the responsible minister would “...commit to an independent review of the government’s decision to close the maritime rescue sub-centres in both St. John’s and Quebec...” (Parliament of Canada, February 9, 2012). Here we see the opposition political parties not only claiming their position that these closures are dangerous, they are also persuading or requesting that the governing political party revisit their decisions to close offices responsible for marine safety. In presenting this tragedy, it appears that the opposition political party is hoping to ensure that the governing political party revisit its decision and rethink the austerity measures with the assistance of independent experts. However, in response Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that

“...the tragedy that occurred last week was very unfortunate but it had nothing to do with the search and rescue centre in St. John’s. We will not review our decision. It is as it stands.” (Parliament of Canada, February 9, 2012).

Later the next month, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) initiated a discussion on the “...real reason a search and rescue helicopter was not sent to Labrador to find missing 14-year old Burton Winters...”, she notes that “The rear admiral said he could not spare a helicopter in case it was needed elsewhere.”; she then states that “...the government is closing the maritime rescue sub-centre in St. John’s with its local knowledge and expertise...” and asks “...will someone in the government tell the Prime Minister he has to reverse his decision or more lives will be lost?” (Parliament of Canada, March 26, 2012). In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) starts his response by stating

“...as I have said many times in this House, we would never close the sub-centre in St. John’s if we thought we would be putting mariners or anybody else at risk. We will continue with the process of closing the sub-centre.” (Parliament of Canada, March 26, 2012).

Despite the position claimed by the opposition party, the tragic loss of life, and the opposition political party’s attempts to persuade and negotiate, the governing political party confirmed their agenda and continued to build the opinion that there were no dangers in closing the facilities.

Scott Simms (LIB – opposition political party) raised issues with the closure of the St. John’s and Quebec rescue centres when he highlighted that

“...none of the old coordinators are going to Halifax from St. John’s. We now know that the Conservatives have agreed to hire new coordinators with less experience and less

qualifications....” and asked the responsible minister “...within his speaking points, could he tell us if this is true and if safety is not being compromised...” (Parliament of Canada, March 7, 2012).

In this question, we see a number of elements that have already been highlighted in previous exchanges; specifically, it would appear that the opposition political party is seeking to claim a position that links safety and security issues with the terminating of a skilled public service staff-base and then replacing them with new trainees. In this question we can also see the opposition political party building an opinion that the governing political party is only responding with the use of “speaking points”. In response to these questions, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) started his response by stating:

“...as I have said many times, safety will not be compromised...” and that “...all people in the sub-centre in St. John’s were given the opportunity to transfer if they so wished. Obviously some of them did not want to go.” (Parliament of Canada, March 7, 2012).

In keeping with this topic, Stéphane Dion (LIB – opposition political party) accused the minister of:

“...repeating his robo-answer...” and stated that these closures will “...overload the centres in Trenton and Halifax and, above all, put lives in danger on the St. Lawrence River, in the gulf and on the Atlantic Ocean...”; he concluded this by speaking to the governing political party and stating “Do not let this happen. Do not remain passive.

Lives are at risk. They will be on the conscience of the Conservatives.” (Parliament of Canada, March 7, 2012).

To which Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) noted “...that was an incredible statement, totally inaccurate, and not the truth at all... The member is totally wrong.” (Parliament of Canada, March 7, 2012).

Through this exchange, not only do we see the opposition political parties ensuring that they are able to present an image that flags the danger associated with the closure of marine safety facilities, they also react to the statements presented by the governing political party and refer to the response as a “robo-answer”, which is related to the critique that political parties are preparing speaking points. In responding to this exchange, the governing political party is also using a number of expected structures in their response, such as indicating that the question is redundant and has already been answered, as well as advising that the opposition political parties are presenting inaccurate statements within parliament.

In early April 2012, Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) once again noted that

“...the government has been told that the amalgamation of the maritime rescue sub-centres in St.John’s and Quebec with Halifax and Trenton is wrong...” and she emphasized that she considers “...these cuts to be irresponsible and dangerous...” (Parliament of Canada, April 2, 2012).

Again, here we see that the opposition political parties are raising what the governing political party has been advised by others and still framing these austerity cuts as “dangerous” and “irresponsible”. In responding to these statements, Randy Kemp (CPC – governing political party) said:

“...I think what my colleague is not getting is that this change does not affect the availability of search and rescue resources.” and emphasized that his political party “...think[s] it is a positive change and [they] are continuing on with it.” (Parliament of Canada, April 2, 2012).

And, once again, we see that the governing political party is describing the austerity measures and closures as “positive changes” and discrediting the knowledge and value of the statements made by the opposition political party.

Regarding the closing of the coast guard centres, Thomas Mulcair (NDP – opposition political party) stated that:

“...Conservative cuts are putting the security of Canadians at risk, plainly and simply... Just days after the closure of the maritime search and rescue centre in St. John’s, we find out that medical emergency calls made from waters off Newfoundland and Labrador are now being routed to a call centre in Italy. Callers report not being connected to doctors who cannot even understand them. This is a net result of Conservative cuts. Public safety is being put at risk.” (Parliament of Canada, May 10, 2012).

Stephen Harper (CPC – governing political party) responded by stating that:

“In the case the hon. Member mentions, there is no change to procedure here. The first response to these calls has always been to medical facilities in Halifax. There is a backup in case those calls are backed up.” (Parliament of Canada – May 10, 2012).

Further to this topic, Bob Rae (LIB – opposition political party) continued to emphasize that there is a specific example where the caller was routed to a call centre in Rome, Italy. Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded by noting that this “...internationally recognized service provider has been used in the event that backup is required.” (Parliament of Canada, May 10, 2012). In these exchanges, we still see the opposition political parties flagging issues with the austerity measures and the closure of the maritime safety units. However, the governing political party does not appear to dismiss the opposition political parties, as it has done in previous questions and responses. Instead, we see the governing political party explaining the nature of the procedures and the processes in a manner that provides a certain amount of transparency, while also presenting the governing political party in a positive light.

Almost a week later, Lawrence MacAulay (LIB – opposition political party) initiated a discussion that would last for over thirteen (13) minutes, and would provide an overview of the opposition political party’s positions on a number of closures on the east coast of Canada, when he stated that:

“...the government is not only ruining the Canadian fishery, it is now putting Canadian lives at stake. After closing the Coast Guard centres in St. John’s and Quebec City, now it has decided to shut down the biggest and busiest search and rescue centre on the west coast, in Kitsilano, B.C. It is also reducing the Coast Guard regions from 5 to 3 and firing 763 Coast Guard employees.” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012).

In his initial response, Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) advised that he “...can assure [his] colleague that the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners...” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012). In response to this standardized reply, Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) continued by noting:

“Apparently, closing search and rescue stations was not enough for the government. Now it is planning to shut down 10 Coast Guard centres, which analyze marine traffic and navigation conditions.” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012).

Through his response Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) started with:

“...as I said earlier, the safety of Canadians and mariners is the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard. The efficiencies that are proposed by the Coast Guard are balanced and will contribute to its fair share to reducing the deficit.” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012).

While the opposition political party sought to highlight their position that the closures of the centres and the impacts they would have on marine safety, the governing political party reiterated their opinion that there are efficiencies and that it is financially justifiable to terminate the employment of public servants. As a follow-up, Randall Garrison (NDP – opposition political party) continued this discussion by stating:

“...these closures are happening right now. Services are being cut to Coast Guard stations, lighthouses and command centres... They are cutting the Vancouver centre at the busiest time of the year, and it is one of the busiest stations. It is one of the most dangerous cuts we have ever seen in this kind of safety.” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012).

Once again Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) started his response with “...as I have already said...” and reconfirmed that the governing political party did a review of the best usage of resources to “...best meet the needs of mariners...” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012). Already, in this exchange we can see that the opposition political parties are flagging safety and security. They are also referencing the cuts that are directly related to the public service and the number of individuals who will no longer be employed by the federal government after the austerity measures are fully implemented, while the governing political party is focused almost exclusively on efficiencies and reduced deficits. As a follow-up to this, Lawrence MacAulay (LIB – opposition political party) continues and states that:

“We now understand that [the governing political party] is eliminating over 1,000 jobs from DFO, on top of the over 400 employees who were fired at Christmas.” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012).

In response to this, Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) then advises that:

“...to the contrary, while we will not apologize for acknowledging that our government’s top priorities are to ensure a strong and growing economy and to spend tax dollars wisely, our government has found fair, balanced and moderate savings to reduce the deficit and accomplish this goal.” (Parliament of Canada, May 18, 2012).

We can see that the opposition political parties continue to claim a position that the reduction of the public service (in the areas related to marine safety) will have an impact on marine safety. In the responses from the governing political party that even when questioned about the safety and the rationale behind the austerity measures, the governing political party’s focus remains unchanged from finding efficiencies, saving money and presenting the austerity measures as a type of fiscal responsibility for taxpayers.

Ten (10) days later, Joyce Murray (LIB – opposition political party) reanimated the discussion on the west coast closures when she stated that the:

“...closing of the Kitsilano search and rescue station will result in people dying... This Vancouver Coast Guard base is the busiest in Canada. This year it has handled more than

70 life-and-death emergencies well before summer even started.” (Parliament of Canada, May 28, 2012).

Again here, we can see that the opposition political party is claiming a position that the austerity measures will have an impact on overall marine safety. In response to this position building, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) noted that “...as always, the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners. The level of search and rescue service in Vancouver will not be affected and will remain the same.” (Parliament of Canada, May 28, 2012). As a follow-up to this response, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) then continues to say that:

“...the cuts do not end with protecting fresh water. There are major cuts to the Coast Guard too. The Kitsilano station in the heart of Vancouver is one of the busiest in Canada, but the government is planning to close it.” (Parliament of Canada, May 28, 2012).

Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) once again notes that “...as I indicated earlier, levels of search and rescue service in Vancouver will remain the same.” (Parliament of Canada, May 28, 2012). To which Fin Donnelly (LIB – opposition political party) emphasizes that “...last weekend 55 lives were saved because of the Kitsilano station alone. With growing traffic, the impacts could be severe, but the government did not consult anyone but DND...” (Parliament of Canada, May 28, 2012). Once again Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party)

responds to note that "...we are very aware and we are convinced that search and rescue services in Vancouver will remain the same." (Parliament of Canada, May 28, 2012).

In these instances, we can see that the opposition political party continues to build and assert their position that safety will be impacted, while the governing political party provides the same response indicating that there will be no impact on safety. Continuing this conversation a few days later, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) states that "...the Conservatives are making cuts to marine safety... the Conservatives are sticking to their reckless plan to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard station..." (Parliament of Canada, May 30, 2012). To which Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) confirms that "...nothing could be further from the truth. Our first priority is always, primarily and foremost, the safety of mariners..." (Parliament of Canada, May 30, 2012). Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) pushes again by noting

"...if the Conservatives had bothered to consult anyone about this decision, they would have found how reckless it was. This cut will increase risk to coastal communities... the fisheries minister plans to fill the gap with volunteers..." (Parliament of Canada, May 30, 2012).

In response Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) advises that he "...finds it shocking that the member opposite would demonize our volunteers... It is inexcusable to talk in those terms. In no way would we be jeopardizing the safety of our mariners..." (Parliament of Canada, May 30, 2012). In this instance, we can see that while the opposition political party is continuing

to claim the position that the closure will impact safety, the governing political party reverses the opposition critique to a demonizing of volunteers. Instead of acknowledging the potential impacts associated with replacing paid public servants with volunteer resources, the governing political party builds the opinion that the opposition political party is critical of volunteer resources.

Less than fifteen minutes later, Hedy Fry (LIB – opposition political party) reanimates this discussion by highlighting that “...Vancouver city council passed a motion demanding a reversal of the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard base... I get a knot in my stomach and want to throw up...” (Parliament of Canada, May 30, 2012). Deflecting the comment regarding Vancouver city council, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) states “...as I indicated before, the safety of mariners is our primary concern...” he then praises the volunteers and notes that his government will work with these volunteers (Parliament of Canada, May 30, 2012). In this instance the opposition political party is using the stature of external expertise (in this case the City of Vancouver) to assist in claiming their position. A few days later, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) advises that:

“...in Vancouver, over 100 people packed a town hall meeting to voice their objection to the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. Coast Guard workers and volunteers, recreational boaters and even yacht owners were on hand to raise their concerns...” (Parliament of Canada, June 4, 2012).

In response, Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) restated that “...the Canadian Coast Guard’s highest priority is the safety of mariners... Vancouver mariners will be well protected.” (Parliament of Canada, June 4, 2012). The opposition political parties are still using language that presents the austerity measures as “cuts”, “reckless”, and “shocking” and they also emphasize the empirical value of the research centre. In addition, here we see that a number of legislators with the opposition political parties appear to be clustering their questions on the same topic. It also appears that the clustering of these questions is having an impact on the governing political party and we see that the responses include references to previous exchanges, confirmation that the governing political party is already aware of the issues, and assurances that the governing political party is ensuring the safety of Canadians.

Later the same month, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) continued this discussion and noted that:

“...British Columbians are very concerned about the closure of Coast Guard stations on our coast. They understand the Coast Guard is the front line of safety on the ocean, but so far the Conservatives have been deaf to their concerns. Conservative cuts will mean only two marine communication centres to monitor 27,000 kilometres of coastline and delay response times off Vancouver...” (Parliament of Canada, June 20, 2012).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded stated:

“...as I have said many times, the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners. Our government is committed to reducing the deficit and has found a fair, balanced and moderate savings to meet these goals...” (Parliament of Canada, June 20, 2012).

As a follow-up to the governing political party’s response, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) noted that:

“...the minister just does not get it. Perhaps if there were somebody in his caucus who could explain to him the seriousness of this, the minister would understand that these cuts are bad for the west coast...” (Parliament of Canada, June 20, 2012).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) advises that:

“...as [he] mentioned earlier in [his] previous answer to the member opposite, we are finding efficiencies within the Coast Guard and we are not putting anybody at risk, certainly not our mariners...” (Parliament of Canada, June 20, 2012).

Already, in this exchange we can see the opposition political party advising that there are safety concerns and that the governing political party “does not get it”, while also maintaining an ongoing clustering of questions on the topic. A few moments later, Hedy Fry (LIB – opposition political party) reignited the issue by stating:

“...Conservative MPs like the member for Nanaimo-Alberni are openly criticizing their government’s decision to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard base and three marine communications centres in B.C. He correctly points out that B.C. is prone to regular earthquakes that can shut down communication stations and that maintenance issues with hovercraft will affect the crowded Vancouver port...” (Parliament of Canada, June 20, 2012).

In his response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated “...as I said earlier, the changes that were proposed to move the Canadian Coast Guard would not impact on the safety of mariners in any way, shape or form...” (Parliament of Canada, June 20, 2012). In the later part of the exchange, the opposition political parties raised the issue not only of an expert or a stakeholder, but noted that there may be dissent within the governing political party regarding their austerity measures.

After the summer break, the discussions on the west coast marine and Coast Guard centres were revived when Joyce Murray (LIB – opposition political party) flagged that:

“...the City of Vancouver released its analysis showing that the cutting of the Kitsilano coast guard base, the busiest one in Canada, will put people’s lives at risk. Perhaps the Conservatives do not think it is their job to worry about those people and that is why they are trying to pass the buck. However, the City of Vancouver cannot pick up the slack from that service gap and that is why our mayor has asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister...” (Parliament of Canada, September 19, 2012).

Again, here we see an example of the opposition political party utilizing the expertise of other entities in their approach towards these discussions. Not only do they use these entities, they also employ language such as “pass the buck”, “slack”, and emphasize that these austerity measures are “cuts”. In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) states:

“...as I have indicated many times, the first and foremost concern of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of mariners... There will be no negative impact on our ability to respond quickly and effectively to distress incidents on the water...” (Parliament of Canada, September 19, 2012).

In the governing political party’s response we do not see a pronounced divergence from the responses that were being provided prior to the summer break. That is, there is still an acknowledgement that the governing political party has already responded to these questions and that there will be no impact on safety.

A few days later, Carol Hughes (NDP – opposition political party) questioned the closure of the

“...Thunder Bay Marine Communications and Traffic Services Centre that monitors Lake Superior, the St. Mary’s River and the north shore of Lake Huron...” noting as well that “...fewer operators, farther away, will be answering almost 400 more calls... this closure will lead to even more disasters on our Great Lakes...” (Parliament of Canada, September 25, 2012).

In his response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that:

“...nothing could be further from the truth. Technology has evolved over the last number of years, and our government is investing in the Coast Guard’s infrastructure to take advantage of today’s technology to deliver the same services from larger centres at strategic locations across the country...” (Parliament of Canada, September 25, 2012).

In these exchanges, we see again that the governing political party is attempting to deflect the criticism first by dismissing the opposition political party’s statement as untruthful and then by noting that technological advances and efficiencies are being employed to ensure the safety of Canadians.

Then in November, Denis Coderre (LIB – opposition political party) talked about the Conservative government “cutting services” and said that “...after listening to the Conservatives, the word of the day seems to be hogwash...” (Parliament of Canada, November 7, 2012). Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) responded by stating that:

“...the Canadian Coast Guard is committed to ensuring the safety of mariners and maintaining its current levels of service... Better connected centres equipped with modern technology will ensure improved reliability of services.” (Parliament of Canada, November 7, 2012).

Later, in December, Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) noted that he was of the opinion that “...closing the Quebec City search and rescue centre is another example of this government’s improvisation. Francophone mariners still have not guarantee that services will be available in their language...” (Parliament of Canada, December 5, 2012). In response, Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) responded with “...as I said, the safety of mariners is our top priority. We are confident that the changes we are making in Quebec City will have no negative impact on the ability to respond to distress incidents...” (Parliament of Canada, December 5, 2012). Shortly after this exchange, Hedy Fry (LIB – opposition political party) stated that:

“...Vancouver police and fire chiefs have now written the Prime Minister protesting the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard base next May, saying that it would compromise safety and endanger lives... It is Conservative incompetence that caused the debt to skyrocket and led to deep cuts in services to Canadians that sacrifice human life in the name of ideology...” (Parliament of Canada, December 5, 2012).

Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) responded again by stating:

“...the top priority of the Canadian Coast Guard is the safety of our mariners... We have invested billions of dollars in Canadian Coast Guard assets. There are more assets in Vancouver harbour than in any harbour in the country. When this member’s party was in government, the Coast Guard was tied to the wharf, rusting and underfunded.” (Parliament of Canada, December 5, 2012).

Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) emphasized again that:

“...the chiefs of the Vancouver police and fire departments have written to the Prime Minister urging him to reverse the plan to shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. The chief of police has consulted with other experts and says that the long response times will be longer and the level of service will be negatively impacted...” (Parliament of Canada, December 11, 2012).

Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) reiterates that:

“...these Coast Guard changes value lives and livelihood above all else. As I have said in the House before, changes to the Coast Guard will have no impact on our ability to provide the world-class excellent service that Canadians and mariners have come to expect...” (Parliament of Canada, December 11, 2012).

Through these exchanges, it becomes clear that the opposition political parties were persistent in raising the full range of considerations related to the closure of maritime centres. It also becomes clear that the goal of the governing political party is to reform the message of these exchanges to ensure that it is clear they are prioritizing the safety of Canadians and that there is no impact on services.

Into the New Year the opposition political parties continued their questioning of the governing political party. At the end of January 2013, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) stated that:

“...last May Conservatives announced they were closing marine communication stations in Comox, Tofino and Vancouver. Then they announced they were shutting down the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, the busiest in the country. Those were two decisions imposed on British Columbia and no consultation...” (Parliament of Canada, January 30, 2013).

In response to the opposition political party’s position that the governing political party proceeded without proper consultations, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded by once again noting he has “...addressed both of these issues many times. With regards to the Kitsilano question, Vancouver will have an abundance of federally-funded search and rescue assets available to protect and save lives...”; it should be noted that the response does not address the other question related to the consultations. (Parliament of Canada, January 30, 2013). While the opposition political parties continue to assert a position that there are dangerous elements associated with the plans to close the marine centres, the governing political party continues to insist that there is no impact on safety.

Continuing this discussion into February, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) stated again that “...the Prime Minister claimed that the decision to close the Kits Coast Guard station was made in the interest of public safety. However, the people responsible for public safety on

the coast contradict the Prime Minister's claim..." (Parliament of Canada, February 11, 2013).

Again, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) reiterated that his party has:

"...listened to search and rescue experts, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Coast Guard. This question has been addressed thoroughly. Vancouver will continue to have an abundance of federally funded search and rescue assets available to protect and save lives..." (Parliament of Canada, February 11, 2013).

Not letting this line of questioning end, and later in the month, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) confirmed that:

"...Conservatives should make saving lives on both coasts a priority. Unfortunately, last week the Conservatives quietly shut down B.C.'s Kitsilano Coast Guard station in Canada's busiest port. This station costs less than \$1 million a year to operate. In fact, it costs less than the travel expenses of just three Conservative senators..." (Parliament of Canada, February 25, 2013).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) noted that "...of course the government's paramount concern is to allocate its resources in a way that is obviously based on advice from the Coast Guard and is best for public safety..." (Parliament of Canada, February 25, 2013). Through these exchanges, the opposition political parties continue to note that the governing political party did not consult appropriately and that individuals responsible for public safety disagree with the governing political party's decision. The opposition political party also

confirmed that in February 2013 the Coast Guard station was officially closed, and questioned the cost-benefit analysis performed by the governing political party. In the governing political party's responses, we see that they once again refer to their frustration or disdain related to the repetitive nature of the questions and that they continue to focus on the safety of Canadians. It was also interesting that at one point, the governing political party was not responding to the opposition's assertion that they had not consulted broadly within the public safety sector; it was not until the second response that they governing political party stated that they did consult with officials within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Coast Guard.

A few days later, the discussions turned to the address the response times in British Columbia and how the closure of these facilities directly impacted the safety of mariners in the Vancouver area. Don Davies (NDP – opposition political party) advised that:

“...this past weekend a ship ran aground in English Bay near Vancouver. If the Kitsilano base were still open, the Coast Guard could have responded in a matter of minutes, but instead the response time from Sea Island was over half an hour. British Columbians are concerned about the closure of Vancouver's only Coast Guard station, but the conservative government is not listening...” (Parliament of Canada, March 4, 2013).

In his response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) advises that “...the member opposite is totally wrong, again. The incident in question actually had a response of 11 minutes by SAR in Vancouver, an excellent service that is impeccable.” (Parliament of Canada, March 4, 2013). As a follow-up and to clarify the response from the governing political party, Don Davies

(NDP – opposition political party) noted that “...the fact is we were lucky no one was hurt this weekend... Sea Island took 31 minutes, not 11 minutes to respond in English Bay. If this accident had occurred in Burrard Inlet, it would have taken an hour or more...” (Parliament of Canada, March 4, 2013). In responding, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) again stated that “...again, the member opposite is totally incorrect. The response time by the Royal Canadian Marine SAR was 11 minutes. It took 35 minutes for Sea Island to respond, but SAR was on location in 11 minutes...” (Parliament of Canada, March 4, 2013). Just a few days later, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) advised that:

“...less than three weeks since the Conservatives closed the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, and already there have been two accidents. For the first incident, Sea Island took over 30 minutes to respond, and this morning, they arrived after the fishing boats had already sunk and the fishermen were in the cold water. Now they are being treated for hypothermia. This is totally unacceptable...” (Parliament of Canada, March 6, 2013).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) said that:

“...it is obvious that the member opposite has no understanding, completely no understanding, of SAR, search and rescue. The response time of the incident he mentioned was 11 minutes by the Royal Canadian Marine SAR auxiliary unit. They were there in 11 minutes. A previous incident had a 10-minute response time, and this morning, the response time, from the time we received the mayday, was 24 minutes.” (Parliament of Canada, March 6, 2013).

Breaking the pattern of opposition political parties making statements and then the governing political party responding, the following exchange is an instance where a member of the governing political party made a statement. John Weston (CPC – governing political party) immediately followed his party colleague to note that “...further to the minister’s comments just now, we Canadians have great reason to be proud of our Coast Guard... Under our government, Canada has seen the first new large vessel built for the Coast Guard in over 30 years...” (Parliament of Canada, March 6, 2013). In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded to his colleague to confirm: “...yes, we are very proud to support our search and rescue experts within the Coast Guard. The government has made enormous investments in the Coast Guard fleet...” (Parliament of Canada, March 6, 2013). While these exchanges relate to a series of specific incidents, and it appears that there are two items being flagged (the response of SAR and the response from the Sea Island). While there is a dispute between the two response times (11 minutes versus more than 30 minutes) and whether the response time was adequate or in any way diminished by the closure of the Coast Guard centre, it is clear that the opposition and governing political parties are utilizing similar language to ensure that their political party’s image is presented in the most positive light possible. It is also noted that the exchanges between the governing political party does not appear to be common, in the texts reviewed, though it is noted that the governing political party is commenting to itself on what a great job it has done regarding the construction of a new Coast Guard ship.

The very next day, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) stated that:

“...we have heard from search and rescue, fire and police chiefs, the mayor, and the B.C. Premier that the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station is reckless. Now we find that the assistant commissioner western region was removed from her position for opposing the closure...” (Parliament of Canada, March 7, 2013).

In this statement, the opposition political party is not only evoking the expertise of other officials within the affected region, they are also noting that public servants may have been punished for opposing or speaking truth³ to the governing political party, which speaks to the nature of the public servant that has been noted in recent reviews (Office of the Auditor General, 2018). Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) starts his response by saying:

“...it is a shame that the member opposite continues to attack the brave men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard and Coast Guard auxiliary...”, at which point he is interrupted by other members and it appears that his statement is stopped for a period of time; after this pause, he goes on to note that “...the Coast Guard yesterday rescued two individuals within 17 minutes of receiving the call. The strength of our response system is in the network of the responders...” (Parliament of Canada, March 7, 2013).

³ Sometimes referenced as “speaking truth to power”; and further to the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada, where the Auditor General noted that the public service has an “obedient culture that puts itself at risk of failure” and that there has been an erosion of the ability of the public service to convey “hard truths” and for the senior levels, including political parties, to hear these truths (Office of the Auditor General, 2018).

In the governing party's response, we see that they are positioning the questions from the opposition political party as an attack on the first responders and other security staff, instead of as a question on the austerity measures that have been adopted by the governing political party. This approach, while it does not appear to be well-received in parliament (since the legislator was interrupted mid-speech), could be seen as a strategy to position the opposition political party as critical of the capacity of public safety officials and first responders.

In response to a tragedy on the west coast of Canada, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) noted that:

“...the death of a man on a freighter in English Bay last week has raised new questions about the reckless Conservative decision to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. It took paramedics nearly 40 minutes to reach the patient. It was a reckless and dangerous decision to close this station.” (Parliament of Canada, April 17, 2013).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) highlighted that:

“...the facts are that since the closure of the Canadian Coast Guard station in Kitsilano base on February 19, 2013, the Canadian Coast Guard Sea Island station has responded to 37 search and rescue maritime distress incidents in the greater Vancouver area. These incidents involved 47 lives at risk. In all cases the CCG hovercraft has consistently had a reaction time of less than 10 minutes after receiving the tasking, which is well within the national service standards of 30 minutes.” (Parliament of Canada, April 17, 2013).

Not long after this exchange, Hedy Fry (LIB – opposition political party) emphasized that:

“...the Auditor General said Canada’s search and rescue was at breaking point, with a lack of personnel, aging equipment and no clear policy for search and rescue. Three weeks ago, a sailor died at English Bay of a heart attack. It took more than 48 minutes for the Coast Guard to get paramedics to his ship. If the Kitsilano base were open it would have taken 10 minutes. Experts predict lives will be lost.” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2013).

In response to these additional comments, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) then responded to underscore “...as I have said many times, there is no way we will put in jeopardy the lives of our mariners and people on the water. As for the Kitsilano base, the member is wrong. The response time was much quicker than she indicated.” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2013).

Through these exchanges, we can see another instance where the governing political party is being questioned on a marine tragedy and accusations from the opposition political parties that the austerity measures and the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard centre is responsible for this tragedy. The opposition political parties continue to use language to frame this tragedy, within the context of the austerity measures enacted by the governing political party to claim the position as a “breaking point”, or as “recklessness”, and to underline the “dangerous” aspects of these decisions. The opposition political parties continue to claim their position, but also appears

to be attempting to persuade or negotiate with the governing political party. In response, and while the governing political party notes their ongoing commitment to public safety, they also note that the response times quoted by the opposition political parties are inaccurate.

Near to the end of this study, and at the beginning of June 2013, Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) noted that:

“...the Conservative government closed the Kitsilano Coast Guard station with no consultation and without even producing a risk analysis report. Now, three of five B.C. marine communication and traffic services centres will also close. Similar cuts in the Arctic meant mariners went without emergency radio service for over a week. Marine safety experts are warning us that these closures are too risky...” (Parliament of Canada, June 3, 2013).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) started with “...as I have indicated many times in the House...” and then proceeded to confirm his government’s investment in technology and ensuring the safety of mariners (Parliament of Canada, June 3, 2013). As the final exchange reviewed under this section, it is not completely unexpected that the opposition political party would evoke language related to the cuts that emphasize risk and reductions of emergency services, while the governing political party would continue to dismiss the line of questioning by advising that it has already been addressed and that the technology and efficiencies will enable the austerity measures to proceed without issues. Overall, it does not appear that the parliamentary exchanges resulted in improved public policy or meaningful

legislative amendments; while the concept of deliberative democratic parliamentary debate is discussed by Ilie (2016 and 2017) and Proksch and Slapin (2014), the avoidance of the underlying ideological debates associated with cuts to the federal public service support a categorization of these exchanges as an attempt at messaging (both to voters and their own political party), instead of persuading public policy or legislation.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Coast Guard and Marine Safety

In keeping with the discussions regarding the closure of Coast Guard centres, opposition political parties also raised issues surrounding official language capacity during the Oral Question Period. These discussions mainly focused on the closure of centres in Quebec and eastern Canada and the transfer of these responsibilities to traditionally unilingual regions within Canada (such as Halifax and Trenton). In February 2012, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) questioned the governing political party on its decision to move:

“...marine rescue services several hundred kilometres away from Quebec City...” noting that “...the Conservatives are gambling with the safety of Quebec’s francophone fishers and pleasure boaters. The last thing that distressed boaters who need professionals to come to their rescue want to hear is, Sorry, I don’t speak French...”; in referring to the closure of the Quebec City coast guard rescue centre, this was finished by a pointed question asking “Will the government reconsider its decision or not?” (Parliament of Canada, February 7, 2012).

Similar to the previous section, we see that the opposition political party is using language that positions the austerity measures as a gamble for francophone mariners. The opposition political party is also claiming a position that the closure of these facilities will result in reduced French-language capacity. In concluding, she also appears to be negotiating with the governing political party and hoping that there is some flexibility that would result in keeping the Quebec facilities open to maintain French capacity. In response to this question, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated “...the answer is no. We will ensure that there is safety for all mariners, and the language capabilities will be in place before we move forward with our decision.” (Parliament of Canada, February 7, 2012). Here we can see that the governing political party is standing firm in its set agenda and that they are building the opinion that the proposed austerity measures and closures will proceed and that there will be no impact on French-language capacity.

Almost two months later, on March 27, 2012, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) raised the issues surrounding the closure of the Quebec sub-centre and the loss of francophone expertise while also stating that her “...colleagues have just demonstrated the importance of an effective search and rescue system, but the Conservatives will not listen.” (Parliament of Canada, March 27, 2012). The opposition political party is raising an important issue regarding the potential loss of French-language capacity within the federal Coast Guard and other centres related to marine safety. In his answer to this statement, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) begins his response by advising that “...the member’s question has been addressed thoroughly many times in the House” and the response does not appear to make any additional specifications (Parliament of Canada, March 27, 2012). Similar to the discussions

surrounding the broader issue of marine safety, we see that the governing political party is returning to a strategy of responses that references their previous replies and dismisses the premise of the question being posed by the opposition political party. As an immediate follow-up, Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) confirmed that “...the reason why we continue to ask the question is because their plan is not working” (Parliament of Canada, March 27, 2012). As if unphased by the opposition political party’s second question, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded again that “...as stated many times, all language capabilities will be put in place so that there will be no danger for mariners. We will continue with the plan as we move forward. We look forward to the new operations.” (Parliament of Canada, March 27, 2012). In this exchange the opposition political party continues to claim the position that the closure of facilities and centres with existing francophone expertise will have impact the safety of Canadian mariners. However, the governing political party responds by simply confirming that there will be francophone capacity and that this is already addressed in the new operational structure.

Almost a month later, Stéphane Dion (LIB – opposition political party) returns to the issue of francophone capacity and noted that:

“...the Commissioner of Official Languages confirmed our fears about the closure of the Quebec City rescue centre. Personnel in Halifax and Trenton will not provide 24/7 bilingual service. The staff will not be able to cover the large number of French-language distress calls. Bilingual capacity is scandalously inadequate.” (Parliament of Canada, April 24, 2012).

Again, the opposition political party is evoking the expertise of another stakeholder/expert (the Commissioner of Official Languages) in order to frame their position on the closure of facilities with French-language capacity. In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) started by saying that “...again, the member opposite is wrong... [the change] does not affect the availability of officially bilingual personnel in those locations.” (Parliament of Canada, April 24, 2012). Here, we can see that the governing political party is returning to a strategy of dismissing the comments and questions posed by the opposition political party, without necessarily providing specific details. The governing political party then builds the opinion that there will be bilingual capacity; however, the governing political party does not specifically address the report from the Commissioner of Official Languages and relies on simply stating that the bilingual and French-language capacity will be sufficient.

It is not until later that year, in October, when Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) flagged the closure of the search and rescue centres in Quebec City as “...another example of an irresponsible budget cut... This centre responds to roughly 1,500 maritime distress calls a year and it is the only centre that provides bilingual service in Canada...” (Parliament of Canada, October 1, 2012). In this instance the opposition political party is claiming the position that the austerity measures are “irresponsible”, while also highlighting the closure of Canada’s only bilingual marine centre. In response, Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) states: “...as we have said many times before, we are doing this transition and consolidation of the sub-centre into Trenton very carefully and ensuring we have the necessary linguistic services...” (Parliament of Canada, October 1, 2012). Again, here we see the governing political party

dismissing the concerns raised by the opposition political party, while simply providing assurances that linguistic capacity will be maintained, while still not providing any specific details outlining how the capacity will be met nor are they responding to the criticism directly.

Later in the month, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) again questioned the closure of the Quebec City search and rescue center; and, after first being interrupted by other parliamentarians, she stated:

“...after announcing that the Quebec City search and rescue centre would close in April 2012, the Conservatives have now postponed the closure until April 2013...” she then proceeded to ask: “Can the government confirm that it still has not found qualified bilingual staff in Halifax and Trenton and that it plans on postponing the closure of the centre in Quebec City until the fall of 2013?” (Parliament of Canada, October 30, 2012).

In this question, the opposition political party’s position is that the closure of the facilities should be postponed and is both persuading and negotiating with the governing political party, to ensure that the linguistic capacity is maintained. In response, Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) stated that:

“...search and rescue is the highest priority of the Canadian Coast Guard and the consolidation of the marine rescue sub-centre in Quebec will in no way increase any risk to the public. The provision of bilingual services is essential and the Coast Guard will

continue to enhance bilingual service as part of the consolidation.” (Parliament of Canada, October 30, 2012).

In this response, the governing political party recognizes that bilingual services are an essential part of the Coast Guard and that these services will be maintained. We can also see that instead of addressing the closure, they utilize the term “consolidation”, which is likely an effort to use language to detract from terms such as “closure” or other common austerity-related terms.

A few months later, in December, Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) stated that “...closing the Quebec City search and rescue centre is another example of this government’s improvisation. Francophone mariners still have not guarantee that services will be available in their language...” (Parliament of Canada, December 5, 2012). In response, Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) responded with “...as I said, the safety of mariners is our top priority. We are confident that the changes we are making in Quebec City will have no negative impact on the ability to respond to distress incidents...” (Parliament of Canada, December 5, 2012). Again here, we see the opposition political party claiming the position that the austerity measures will have an impact on French-language services and then we see the governing political party avoiding language such as “closing” and opting for more benign language, such as “changes” (previously it was a consolidation). It appears that the governing political party is avoiding references to the austerity measures and closures, while introducing softer language on changing and consolidating the Quebec centres.

Before the end of January, Stéphane Dion (LIB – opposition political party) noted that:

“...the government plans to close the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre and split the province down the middle, entrusting the western part to the centre in Trenton and the eastern part to the centre in Halifax, despite the safety problems caused by distance and the agents’ questionable grasp of French. It is absurd and offensive and puts lives at risk...” (Parliament of Canada, January 30, 2013).

In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) reiterated that “...we are confident that changes in Quebec City will have no negative impact on our ability to respond to distress incidents on the water quickly, effectively and in both languages...” (Parliament of Canada, January 30, 2013). Again, we see a similar pattern where the opposition political party positions the closure as having a meaningful impact on French-language capacity within the maritime safety network, while the governing political party simply states that there will be no such impact. Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) noted that “...the riding of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, passed a resolution calling on the government to cancel the closure of the Quebec City marine sub-centre. Even Conservative supporters in Quebec City support the NDP on this issue...” (Parliament of Canada, January 30, 2013). In developing their position, the opposition political party once again relied on the opinions of stakeholders (residents, supporters, and constituents) and also appears to be attempting to persuade the governing political party to re-examine the proposed closures of the Quebec City centre. Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded to once again say:

“...as I indicated earlier, we are confident that changes in the Quebec City operation will have no negative impact on our ability to respond to distress incidents on the water quickly, effectively and in both official languages...” (Parliament of Canada, January 30, 2013).

Then in March 2013, Christine Moore (NDP – opposition political party) emphasised

“...the Conservatives’ poor budget decisions. Closing the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre is one of their worst budget decisions. The Conservatives are incapable of making improvements to our operational search and rescue capacities...” (Parliament of Canada, March 20, 2013).

In this instance, the opposition political party is using “poor” or “worst” to describe the governing political party’s austerity measures and is noting using this dialogue to paint the governing political party as “incapable”. They are building an opinion that the governing political party is not responding adequately to ensure the ongoing French-language capacity. Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded by simply confirming that his party has “...every confidence that the changes in Quebec City will have no negative impact on our ability to respond to distress incidents on the water quickly, effectively and in both official

languages...” (Parliament of Canada, March 20, 2013). Later the same day, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) noted that:

“...the pilots who travel on the St. Lawrence River between Montreal and Quebec City have had to file a complaint with the Commissioner of Official Languages because they are unable to communicate in French with the icebreaker crew working on the St. Lawrence...” (Parliament of Canada, March 20, 2013).

Here again, the opposition political parties are using stakeholders and experts in official languages to claim their position that the austerity measures enacted by the governing political party are impacting official languages in Canada. In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that “...the question from the person opposite is entirely wrong. The Coast Guard does make every attempt to ensure that each vessel working in Quebec has a bilingual capacity to communicate with other vessels...” (Parliament of Canada, March 20, 2013). In responding to these criticisms the governing political party made certain to emphasize that the opposition political party was “wrong”, while also not addressing the facts raised by the opposition political party; that is, the governing political party did not address the accusation that a complaint was filed with the Commissioner of Official Languages and only noted that efforts are made to ensure a bilingual capacity.

A few days later, Stéphane Dion (LIB – opposition political party) asked the governing political party to:

“...waste less money on propaganda and use that money to keep Quebec City’s maritime rescue centre open instead of closing it in mid-April?”; continuing his statement, he noted that “...Halifax and the Coast Guard have told the minister that they cannot respond to distress calls in French... There is an increased concern in this area...” (Parliament of Canada, March 25, 2013).

Again, we can see that the opposition political parties are relying on the expertise of the Coast Guard to claim the position that the bilingual capacity is not attainable in the short period of time (the closure is referenced as mid-April and the opposition political party is discussing these findings at the end of March). In response, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) said “...of course, before we make any changes in the Quebec office, we will ensure that the language capabilities and the language requirements are there to provide bilingual service. We would never put anyone’s life in danger in this kind of situation.” (Parliament of Canada, March 25, 2013). While again the opinion building is simply stating that there will be a continuity of language capacity, there are no further details outlined in the governing political party’s response.

The next day, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) emphasized that:

“...training exercises at the Halifax centre revealed some major shortcomings in the coordination of rescue services in both official languages. Despite those shortcomings, some activities of the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre will be transferred to Halifax in three weeks...” (Parliament of Canada, March 26, 2013).

In responding to the concerns raised by the opposition political party and with the closure of the Quebec Coast Guard centre looming in a few weeks time, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded to confirm that:

“...the Coast Guard intends to maintain its excellent record of safety and service to mariners. As we have said all along, consolidation will be based on operational needs, public safety and taking the time needed to complete the work properly. Of course, we will maintain bilingual services.” (Parliament of Canada, March 26, 2013).

Immediately following this exchange, Yvon Godin (NDP – opposition political party) claimed that “...everyone knows that the Conservatives’ decision is not the right one. Experts in marine safety, the Corporation of Mid St. Lawrence Pilots and rescue coordinators all agree that this is a bad decision...” (Parliament of Canada, March 26, 2013). Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) then responded with: “...as I said before, consolidation will be based on operational needs, public safety and taking the time needed to complete the job properly. Of course we will provide bilingual services.” (Parliament of Canada, March 26, 2013).

Through these exchanges, we can see that the opposition political parties are focusing on the shortcomings and other experts to uphold their view that the Quebec City Coast Guard centre is not the right decision. We also see that they are raising issues such as “propaganda” and the “shortcomings” of the proposed changes to ensure that their messaging surrounding the closure is clear: it should not happen and it is going to endanger Canadian mariners. In their responses,

the governing political party continues to dismiss the concerns as a question that has already been addressed and to confirm that no changes will be made that endanger Canadians or diminish language capacities. That being said, and since the scheduled closure was scheduled within three-weeks, it is notable that the governing political party was not in a position to provide any further details and with the closure looming in a matter of weeks, it is possible that a number of the public servants in the Quebec facility were starting to contemplate the next stages of their careers.

While the previous exchanges confirmed that the Quebec City Coast Guard centre was scheduled to close in April 2012 (Parliament of Canada, October 30, 2012), and then postponed until April 2013 (Parliament of Canada, October 30, 2012 and Parliament of Canada, March 25, 2013), the discussion surrounding the closure was continued into May 2013. In early May 2013, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) highlighted the opposition political party’s disapproval to the closure when she noted that the Conservatives were:

“...cutting public services such as the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre. Yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed the NDP’s fears about the centre’s closure. Closing this centre could have tragic consequences. It will put Canadians’ lives in danger. The Auditor General has said it. The Commissioner of Official Languages has said it.”
(Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2013).

In this instance it would appear that the opposition political party is attempting to persuade and negotiate with the governing political party to ensure that the Quebec City facility remain

operational. In responding to this clear criticism of the governing political party's austerity measure (which appears to be postponed again), Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) referenced his previous statements and noted that:

“...the Canadian Coast Guard will delay consolidation of the Quebec region until such time as we are confident that bilingual capacity is ensured for that joint rescue centre. The safety of mariners remains a top priority for us. We will do nothing to jeopardize safety.”
(Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2013).

While the governing political party notes that previous statements have confirmed they will delay the closure to ensure adequate bilingual capacity, this is the first response examined through this thesis, from the governing political party, where it is clear that they postpone the closure of the Quebec City Coast Guard centre to ensure French-language capacity.

A few days later, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) once again raised the issue of closing the Quebec City centre, when she stated that:

“...information obtained by Le Soleil... indicates that the Conservatives are preparing to backtrack on their irresponsible decision to close the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre. Under the pretext of eliminating the deficit, the Conservatives wanted to close the only marine rescue sub-centre providing services in French and thus put lives at risk.”
(Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2013).

In responding to the opposition political party's reference to the newspaper information, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responded to state:

“...we have always been clear that safety is our number one priority, and certainly language capability is very important for the centre in Quebec. We are not going to comment on speculation. The safety of mariners is our top priority. The Canadian Coast Guard will delay consolidation of the eastern portion of the Quebec region until it is confident that a bilingual capacity is there in the system.” (Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2013).

As a follow-up, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) remarked that:

“...we still do not have a clear answer. If they would talk to one another instead of spying on one another, we might not be in the predicament. We are talking about public safety. A responsible government must provide some reassurance and not leave the people who use the river and the centre's employees and their families in limbo.” (Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2013).

Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) then confirmed “...that is exactly what we are making: a responsible decision. The Canadian Coast Guard will delay consolidation of the eastern portion of the Quebec region until it is competent in the bilingual capacity of the system.” (Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2013). In this response we see again a clear direction for the governing political party's agenda to ensure that there is adequate bilingual capacity. Two

other questions from Ryan Clearly (NDP – opposition political party) and Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) concerning the closure of rescue centres in St. John’s and Kitsilano resulted in Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) dismissing each of their concerns (Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2013). While the other centres may have been dismissed it is clear that the opposition political parties continued to utilize language that required a “clear answer” and that did not leave people (both citizens and public servants) in “limbo”. In the response the governing political party finally confirmed that they would not close the Quebec regional Coast Guard facility until the governing political party was able to first confirm bilingual capacity in the “consolidated” centres.

Closer to the end of the month, Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) reanimated the discussion surrounding the closure of the Quebec marine centre, noting that:

“...the Commissioner of Official Languages concluded that the Conservatives did nothing to implement his three recommendations regarding bilingualism in rescue centres. They did nothing to guarantee bilingual service or to ensure the safety of francophone maritime users. In short, Halifax cannot take over the activities of the Quebec City centre.” (Parliament of Canada, May 23, 2013).

In claiming this position and supporting it with expertise and opinions from the Commissioner of Official Languages, the opposition political party appears to be attempting to persuade and negotiate with the governing political party to amend their agenda. In response, Jacques Gourde (CPC – governing political party) stated that they “...are currently studying the report and the

recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages.” (Parliament of Canada, May 23, 2013). Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) responded to note that:

“...it has been almost a year since the report came out. I would like the government to stop studying the report and start implementing its recommendations. The commissioner confirmed what the NDP has been saying all along. Unless proper language services are provided, the Quebec City centre should remain open...” (Parliament of Canada, May 23, 2013).

Jacques Gourde (CPC – governing political party) simply responded to note that:

“...we want to make it very clear that the Canadian Coast Guard will not consolidate the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre unless it is convinced that the ability to provide bilingual services will be maintained.” (Parliament of Canada, May 23, 2013).

These exchanges do not appear to provide the same level of certainty as the exchanges earlier in the month, though it does demonstrate again how the opposition political parties utilize the expertise of other stakeholders and experts to reemphasize their worldviews and perspectives. The governing political party still confirms that the “consolidations” will not occur unless the linguistic capacity is established, though the governing political party is not able to respond to criticisms regarding the report from the Commissioner of Official Languages, despite the opposition political party noting that the report has been available for over a year.

REGIONAL CUTS

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency

In addition to the questions relating to the closure of Coast Guard centres, opposition political parties developed positions related to the austerity measures that impacted the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's mandate is to:

“...create opportunities for economic growth in Atlantic Canada by helping businesses become more competitive, innovative and productive, by working with diverse communities to develop and diversify local economies, and by championing the strengths of Atlantic Canada” (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, 2020).

The first question regarding the impacts of the austerity measures on the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency came from Megan Leslie (NDP – opposition political party) who asked why the governing political party is continuing its “...attack on Atlantic Canadian families...” noting the search and rescue cuts, the Fisheries and Oceans cuts, as well as the cuts at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (Parliament of Canada, October 20, 2011). In this instance we can see that the opposition political party is both positioning itself within the austerity measures and also building an opinion that the cuts are an attack on the Atlantic region. In response, Bernard Valcourt (CPC – governing political party) confirmed that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency “...announced that 42 positions would be eliminated...” which prompted Jack Harris (NDP – opposition political party) to assert that the governing political party was “...jeopardizing the future of [the] region with these reckless cuts...” (Parliament of Canada, October 20, 2011). In this exchange we can see that opposition political parties continue to position the austerity measures as “cuts” that are “reckless” and that “jeopardize” Canadians

and the future of Canadians. In response to these assertions, Bernard Valcourt (CPC – governing political party) confirmed that his governing party did not view these as reckless cuts and that it was a matter of “streamlining the operation to give better service and better programs to Atlantic Canadians...” (Parliament of Canada, October 20, 2011). In this instance we can see that even in the context of these austerity measures, the governing political party returns to a use of language and communication style that presents the austerity measures as improvements that streamline and ensure better operations to the specific region. That being said, we can also see certain details being shared by the governing political party, which provides a better conceptualization of the governing party’s agenda.

In February 2012, Gerry Byrne (LIB - opposition political party) revived the discussion and described the situation at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency as “...not good...” and that “...a minimum of 44 pink slips are about to be handed out, with more on the way...” then asking if the governing political party would “...acknowledge that morale at ACOA and ECBC is being hurt by the patronage scandal that it created?” (Parliament of Canada, February 10, 2012). The opposition political party is specifically referencing the austerity measure’s impact on jobs in the Atlantic region and references political patronage by the governing political party. In this instance the opposition political parties are claiming a position that is critical of the austerity measures and frames them within a political patronage scandal.

In response, Bernard Valcourt (CPC – governing political party) clarified the accusations of patronage and noted that it was

“...a staffing decision made, not by ACOA and not by this government, but by a local development organization. The Cape Breton County Economic Development Agency is responsible for its own hiring. I am not expected, I am sure, to answer for it.” (Parliament of Canada, February 10, 2012).

In this instance the governing political party is claiming that the opposition political party is referencing the appointment of an individual to a local organization and that it is not related to the Government of Canada hiring process/procedures. As a follow-up, Gerry Byrne (LIB - opposition political party) continued by stating that:

“...a failed candidate, Cecil Clarke, is getting \$135,000 a year guaranteed...” referring to this as a “mini-Senate seat” and making reference to the situation and that at the same time “...ACOA and ECBC show the door to dozens of their own employees...” (Parliament of Canada, February 10, 2012).

The opposition political party is specifically referencing a failed Member of Parliament candidate, Cecil Clarke, and a staffing decision that stands in contrast to the austerity measures aimed at reducing the number of public servants at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; in reviewing the archived materials, it appears that this is in reference to a position that Cecil Clarke accepted with the Cape Breton County Economic Development Agency, with the funds for the contract coming from the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, which is a Crown Corporation (Canada Broadcasting Corporation, 2011). In response to having the name of the individual in question, Bernard Valcourt (CPC – governing political party) clarifies that he does

“...not know what he is getting excited about...” and that “...the member refers to a staffing decision that was made according to the Public Service Act...” and that he is “...sorry but that is the Public Service Commission’s doing.” (Parliament of Canada, February 10, 2012). In this instance, the governing political party deflects criticism, while not specifically stating that the governing political party had no influence over the staffing decision. In this instance, we see that the governing political party is dismissing the opposition political party’s comments without specifically mentioning whether or not the governing political party wielded any influence over the decisions. In addition, the nature of the question and response removes any tangible discussion surrounding the austerity measures that are reducing the number of public servants employed by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans

The regional impact of austerity measures were also posed when it became clear that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans would also be reducing public service employment. Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) first acknowledged the regional impact of these cuts and then he stated that the governing political party has “...given Atlantic Canada the hook yet again...” and noted that “...200 jobs at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are gone...” (Parliament of Canada, December 12, 2011). Here we see the opposition political party claiming a position that highlights how the austerity measures leave the Atlantic region on the “hook”. In his response Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that: “...certainly there is nothing new in this question. As indicated under the strategic review earlier this year, we said fewer than 1% of DFO employees would be affected...” and noted an “...annual attrition rate of over 6%...” (Parliament of Canada, December 12, 2011).

In this response, we see the governing political party providing details to support their opinion building. It appears that the agenda proposed by the governing political party is to allow attrition to reduce the size of the public service. This is also one of the few times that the governing political party actually response to critiques involving actual figures and concrete actions that are being taken by the governing political party. That said, we can see in the language being used that the governing political party is not referencing cuts or reductions, they are using the term “affected” and are diminishing that very “affect” by stating that the rate of attrition is higher than the number of positions that are anticipated to be “affected”.

After follow-up questions from Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) and Lawrence MacAulay (LIB – opposition political party) both questioning these cuts and the timing of the announcements, Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) stated that “...DFO employees asked us to proceed with this and to advise them before the Christmas season so that they could make plans...” and he emphasized again that these measures were the “...result of our strategic review operation” (Parliament of Canada, December 12, 2011).

Again, we can see that the governing political party is distancing itself from the austerity measures by placing ownership of the timing on the employees and then by placing the decisions regarding who would be “affected” on what appears to be a general “strategic review operation”. Fin Donnelly (NDP – opposition political party) would go on flag that “...400 staff of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are on the chopping block...” (Parliament of Canada, December 13, 2011) and then the next day would draw this same image when he states that “...DFO scientists on the chopping block say the minister’s reckless cuts put fish stocks in

further jeopardy...” (Parliament of Canada, December 14, 2011). These references to chopping blocks did not appear to draw any responses that were flagged within the matrix of this study, which implies that the response was generic (and did not specifically refer to one of the search criteria) or that the governing political party decided not to respond. In both questions the opposition political party is building their position that the governing political party is jeopardizing Canada’s fisheries and ocean management practices.

In 2012, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans staffing was raised again; however, this time Judy Foote (LIB – opposition political party) advised that:

“...the Conservative government’s assault on all things important continues, but it is the most recent actions by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans that is the most disturbing. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were shocked to learn that the minister was looting 20 jobs from the St. John’s DFO office and moving them to his own riding where no DFO offices presently exist...” (Parliament of Canada, May 31, 2012).

Similar to the accusations of political interference were raised, in relation to questions surrounding the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency staffing actions. In this case, the opposition political party is claiming the position that the governing political party is moving public service positions to a region that voted for the governing political party. In reviewing the question it appears that that opposition political party is implying that the governing political party is rewarding circumscriptions that vote for the governing political party, while punishing those circumscriptions that do not vote for the governing political party.

In response to this position, Randy Kemp (CPC – governing political party) started to say that:

“...this should not come as a surprise to the other side by now, but our government is committed to finding efficiencies that are moderate and balanced. That is what we have done in this case. There are currently six centres that handle administrative matters...”, when at this point the dialogue was interrupted by other members’ heckling; after order was restored, he continued to state “...I will start again. As I have said, we are about finding efficiencies that are moderate and balanced...” (Parliament of Canada, May 31, 2012).

In this response, we can see that the governing political party does not respond to the opposition political party’s accusations and instead focuses on building their opinion that these changes are efficiencies and ensure balanced budget requirements.

A few days later, Lawrence MacAulay (LIB – opposition political party) reanimated this discussion by stating:

“...the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans continues to gut the Fisheries Act, take away from the fishers and put Canadians at risk on the sea. Now, he sees fit to take DFO jobs from St. John’s and five other cities, and put them in his own landlocked riding...” (Parliament of Canada, June 4, 2012).

In response to this accusation that the governing political party is rewarding regions that vote for them with public service positions, while removing those positions from ridings that vote for opposition political parties, Randy Kamp (CPC – governing political party) advised that he thinks his “...colleague has his facts wrong...” and repeats the governing political party’s opinion that moving of employees is required to find efficiencies (Parliament of Canada, June 4, 2012).

A few days after this exchange, Robert Chisholm (NDP – opposition political party) raised these concerns again by stating that:

“...no fewer than six Department of Fisheries and Oceans offices will be closing in Newfoundland and Labrador. These offices provide front-line support for the fishing industry on the east coast. They cannot be replaced by a 1-800 number...” (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2012).

Here we can see that the opposition political parties are developing a position that underlines the importance of in-person services and that the governing political party’s agenda is rooted in eliminating these in-person contact points. In response Keith Ashfield (CPC – opposition political party) starts his response by stating: “...as I have indicated many times, it should be no surprise to the member opposite that we are trying to find efficiencies in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans...” (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2012). Ryan Cleary (NDP – opposition political party) continues this discussion by asking:

“...why does the minister not go and visit Trepassy, Arnold’s Cove, Burgeo and the other rural outports that will be losing their DFO offices? Try to explain to those people how job losses and shutdowns are going to somehow make the fisheries better...” (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2012).

In response Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) repeats again how efficiencies will result in improvements (Parliament of Canada, June 6, 2012). Throughout these exchanges the governing political party continues to build an opinion that the changes are required to enhance efficiencies and balance budgets.

Philip Toone (NDP – opposition political party) continues this discussion a few days later when he states:

“...the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has proven once again that he has no desire to protect fish habitat or listen to people from the fishing communities. After his devastating cuts that eliminated contaminants surveillance, weakened marine safety and eliminated six regional offices, the minister is now warning us that there are more cuts to come...” (Parliament of Canada, June 11, 2012).

Keith Ashfield (CPC – governing political party) responds by providing a few facts about the cuts and stating that:

“...we are talking about close to 11,000 employees in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We have sent out 1,000 letters of notification that jobs may be affected, which will probably net out to 400 jobs, just slightly over 3% of the total employment in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which can easily be handled through attrition.”
(Parliament of Canada, June 11, 2012).

In providing these facts, the governing political party appears to move away from a pattern of claiming efficiencies and improvements. That being said, they continue to keep the language referring to the austerity measures as “notifications” and “affected” and to develop the opinion that these cuts are efficiencies and will be handled through attrition.

Service Canada and Employment Insurance

In relation to regional cuts in other departments and agencies, Service Canada and Employment Insurance processing centres was another aspect raised by opposition political parties. On September 19, 2011, Judy Foote (Lib – opposition political party), questioned the governing political party’s intention “...to cut 120 Service Canada processing centres down to 22...” and indicated that this would “...shift jobs out of rural areas with high unemployment into urban centres...” while continuing to emphasize that “Canada’s economy remains fragile...” and the governing political party “...remains illogical...” (Parliament of Canada, September 19, 2011).

In this instance the opposition political party is positioning the governing political party as “illogical” and highlights the need for the processing centres in specific areas of the country with unemployment issues. Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) responded regarding the use of temporary workers and how the governing political party continues to honour their “...commitment to taxpayers to use their dollars wisely” (Parliament of Canada, September 19,

2011). In this instance the governing political party is once again building the opinion that the cuts and austerity measures are required to ensure the efficient use of tax revenues.

Following some additional debate regarding the service centres and EI processing, Claude Patry (BQ – opposition political party) continues this questioning by noting that “...two Service Canada centres that were opened in Conservative ridings in Nova Scotia will remain open.

Meanwhile, bigger centres in opposition ridings will close...” while also emphasizing that when individuals are unemployed “...they do not receive free internet access as a bonus...”

(Parliament of Canada, September 20, 2011). Similar to other accusations of political interference in the closure of regional offices in ridings where the governing political party did less favorably, the opposition political parties are developing a position that appears to attempt to persuade (or at least expose) the governing political party’s political interference in the public service. Rodger Cuzner (Lib – opposition political party) continues this line of questioning and refers to the cuts to Service Canada and Diane Finley’s (CPC – governing political party) response states that the questions are “...absolutely asinine...” and ends this exchange by calling the opposition political party’s position “...dumb, mean-spirited, ludicrous...” (Parliament of Canada, September 21, 2011).

In this instance we see another example of opposition political parties identifying questionable favoritism of ridings that voted for the governing political party and removing public service positions from ridings that voted for opposition political parties. The response from the governing political party appears to be riddled with insults, claiming that the questions themselves (or perhaps the accusations) are “asinine”. Here we can see that the governing

political party is using language to distance itself from the criticism and undermine the concerns raised by the opposition political parties.

On September 23, 2011, Mark Eyking (Lib – opposition political party) discusses the closure of several plants and asks the questions about cuts to Service Canada, to which Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) advises that she has “...explained every day this week...” that her party is “...respecting taxpayers money... and that is why there will be fewer employees...” (Parliament of Canada, September 23, 2011). The governing political party is directly linking the number of public service positions to “taxpayers money” and uses the idea that less public servants is a way to respect taxpayers. It is an interesting response to a question that started with a reference to individuals at a manufacturing plant that are no longer employed, and inferring that those same taxpayers can be respected by eliminating the employment of public servants who are responsible for processing Employment Insurance claims and other benefit applications.

When referencing 73 Service Canada positions that were at risk, in Windsor, Ontario, Brian Masse (NDP – opposition political party) stated that the governing political party “...gave them a pink slip and show[ed] them the door...” (Parliament of Canada, September 26, 2011). Kellie Leitch (CPC – governing political party) responded to confirm her party’s “...mandate to complete Canada’s economic recovery and return to balanced budgets...” while also advising that they are striving to improve “...the way [they] deliver EI services to Canadians...” (Parliament of Canada, September 26, 2011). A few days later, Kellie Leitch (CPC – governing political party) confirms that “...there will be no Service Canada offices closing and no impact

on in-person services...” and that her political party remains committed to “...effective and efficient use of taxpayers’ hard-earned dollars...” (Parliament of Canada, September 28, 2011).

Through these responses it is not clear that the governing political party is addressing the very specific concerns raised by the opposition political party and the governing political party continues to emphasize its role in finding efficiencies and responsibilities to taxpayers. Days later, Alexandrine Latendresse (NDP – opposition political party) declares that the governing political party’s “...cuts to Service Canada are harming the most vulnerable Canadians...” and Ève Péclet (NDP – opposition political party) adds that the governing political party “...clearly does not understand anything about what the unemployed in this country are going through...” and states that “...waiting periods are already too long, and the government is now adding to them by making cuts to the services offered by Service Canada...” (Parliament of Canada, October 7, 2011). The opposition political parties are continuing to frame these austerity measures using language that declares the austerity measures as “harmful” and claiming that the cuts are creating longer wait times and impacting the most “vulnerable Canadians”. Using this language to position the austerity cuts appears to be purposeful, because, as noted previously, these are cuts to public sector positions that are responsible for assisting Canadians navigate federal benefits, such as Employment Insurance benefits.

On October 26, 2011, a similar round of questions are posed relating to the Service Canada cuts and how these will increase difficulties that Canadians already face when trying to reach someone to discuss their EI needs. Jean Crowder (NDP – opposition political party) questions “...just how out of touch the Conservative government is with families in need...” and says that

the governing political party wants “...to take an axe to Service Canada”; Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) first states that her political party is “...automating the service so Canadians can get better service, so they can get it faster, and so it is more affordable...” and later she restates that her political party is “...improving and modernizing our systems so that they are more effective, efficient and affordable...”, while also adding that they have “...a responsibility to taxpayers: to put their money to good use...” (Parliament of Canada, October 26, 2011).

Approximately a month later, Jean Crowder (NDP – opposition political party) stated that “...the government finally found a way to improve service scores: it changed the rules...” and that the employees are directed “...to not even mention the Service Canada hotline to clients...” (Parliament of Canada, November 15, 2011). In response Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) highlighted her political party’s improvements to services and that they are “...automating both the call systems and the EI processing...”, which then prompted Jean Crowder (NDP – opposition political party) to retort that “...the minister has simply automated her talking points...” (Parliament of Canada November 15, 2011). In response to a question from André Bellavance (IND – opposition political party) regarding cuts to Service Canada and other departments, John Baird (CPC – governing political party) advised that his political party is

“...seeking to ensure that every dollar of taxpayer money is spent wisely...” and that “...it is tremendously important we return to balanced budgets so that we do not get into the same situation that Greece, Italy, and Spain find themselves in...” (Parliament of Canada, November 15, 2011).

It is clear that both the opposition political party and the governing political party are claiming their own positions and developing their own series of opinions regarding the impacts on the closing of these centres. The governing political party continues to build the opinion that these closures are in response to fiscal responsibility and will ensure that the Government of Canada is able to return to a balanced budget.

Following questions regarding overtime restrictions for public servants processing EI claims, around the holiday season, Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) advised that “...the exact opposite is true...” and that the governing political party will “...respect that tradition and are adding more resources...” (Parliament of Canada, December 9, 2011). When Andrew Cash (NDP – opposition political party) then accuses the governing political party of cutting “...front line EI workers...”, Diane Finley (CPC – opposition political party) states that “...the hon. Member has his facts totally backward...” (Parliament of Canada, December 9, 2011).

Into the new year, the questions surrounding the cuts at Service Canada continued, with Rodger Cuzner (LIB – opposition political party) who noted “...massive cuts to government positions...” and then stated that “...the minister responsible for Service Canada has crippled her department. She is sleepwalking through a crisis. Canadians are hurting and need their money...”; while Shelly Glover (CPC – governing political party) immediately responded, the statement focused on the “...misery that unfortunately perpetuated by a Liberal government that failed to take steps to allow us to weather a recession better...” (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012).

Claude Patry (BQ – opposition political party) referenced employment insurance delays and stated it was “...because the minister cut jobs in the processing centres...” and asked what the minister has “...to say to families who cannot pay their bills because of these irresponsible cuts?” (Parliament of Canada, February 16, 2012). In response, Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) advised that “...we sympathize with those who have lost their jobs...” and emphasized that the governing political party has “...added several hundred people to the EI process to speed up the processing of claims.” (Parliament of Canada, February 16, 2012).

In follow-up, Jean Crowder (NDP – opposition political party) continued this questioning and asked “Why can this minister not address the real problem? Why can she not see how her cuts are hurting the families who desperately need their employment insurance?” (Parliament of Canada, February 16, 2012). Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) then advised that “...families do get their EI cheques as quickly as possible...” and that “...the backlog is being whittled down...” (Parliament of Canada, February 16, 2012). Guy Caron (NDP – opposition political party) restarted the discussions surrounding EI centres and asked again about the decision to close the Rimouski processing centre and move operations to Theford Mines, into a building that was alleged to belong to a former associate of the Minister of Industry “...who is a Conservative donor who worked on his last election campaign...” and asked “...did the Minister of Industry interfere with the selection process?” (Parliament of Canada, March 9, 2012).

In response, Kelli Leitch (CPC – governing political party) advised that “...the comments of the member opposite are completely false...” and advised that her political party “...is improving

the way we deliver EI services by expanding and modernizing our backroom processes...”; in response to the allegations regarding the Minister of Industry, she said “...let me be clear. The answer is no. The false allegations of the member opposite are not acceptable.” (Parliament of Canada, March 9, 2012). Even when Ruth Ellen Brosseau (NDP – opposition political party) changed the subject to discuss the closure of the “Shawinigan-Sud Tax Centre... which employs 600 people...”, Kelli Leitch (CPC – governing political party) responded again about “...improving the way we deliver EI services to Canadians by modernizing our processes...”, despite this not appearing to be directly related to the possible closure of a tax centre (Parliament of Canada, March 9, 2012). Robert Aubin (NDP – opposition political party) noted the “...evasive answers...” and advised that he would “...ask simple questions...” regarding the possible closure of the Shawinigan Tax Centre; in response Kelli Leitch (CPC – governing political party) once again responded that she has “...been exceptionally clear...” and that her political party “...is moving forward and ensuring that we modernize processes for EI...”, again not responding to the questions regarding the tax centre (Parliament of Canada, March 9, 2012).

The next week, Ruth Ellen Brosseau (NDP – opposition political party) again asked the question regarding the Shawinigan Tax Centre and emphasized that:

“...last week we asked questions about the future of the Shawinigan-Sud Tax Centre. The parliamentary secretary responded by talking about employment insurance. The nonsense just keeps coming. The question was clear: is the CRA tax centre in Shawinigan closing its doors or not? Are hundreds of well-paid jobs going to disappear?” (Parliament of Canada, March 16, 2012).

In response, Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) stated that:

“...no final decisions have been made. We know we must spend taxpayer money wisely, while ensuring that our government programs are both efficient and effective and deliver a high level of service to Canadians...” (Parliament of Canada, March 16, 2012).

Robert Aubin (NDP – opposition political party) highlighted that “...we are talking about a region where the unemployment rate is already over 10%...” he also stated that “Getting a clear answer to a clear question is the challenge of the day.” (Parliament of Canada, March 16, 2012).

Gail Shea (CPC – governing political party) once again stated that “...the answer is that no final decisions have been made on any centers across the country.” (Parliament of Canada, March 16, 2012).

Returning to the issues surrounding the processing of EI claims, Jean-François Fortin (FD – opposition political party) asserted that the governing political party was “...really not doing anything to improve access to employment insurance... It still refuses to improve the system...” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2012). In response, Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) stated that “...there is a shortage of workers and skills throughout the country. For that reason it is very important that the unemployed have access to training that will give them the skills needed to apply for jobs...” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2012). In November, the issue

of Service Canada cuts was raised again by Paulina Ayala (NDP – opposition political party), who stated that:

“...Canadians are paying the price for the cuts the Conservatives are making at Service Canada. Canadians should not have to wait on the phone for hours to get help. What is more, we know that there will be still more cuts, but the Conservatives are not saying how many people will be laid off...” (Parliament of Canada, November 7, 2012).

Tony Clement (CPC – governing political party) then advised that “...departments provided information to Parliament about their finances in a recent report that is available to the public...” (Parliament of Canada, November 7, 2012). In December, Sean Casey (LIB – opposition political party) noted that “...the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development plans to eliminate 46% of jobs in Service Canada offices in Prince Edward Island. The Minister of Veterans Affairs plans to close our only district office and eliminate 800 jobs...” (Parliament of Canada, December 3, 2012). In response, Jason Kenney (CPC – governing political party) stated:

“...yes, it is true that, as part of our efforts to reduce operating expenses in order to reduce the deficit, we have decreased the number of offices. However, we have increased our online services to meet people’s needs much more efficiently... Those are the kinds of results our government is achieving.” (Parliament of Canada, December 3, 2012).

A few days later, Chris Charlton (NDP – opposition political party) clarified that:

“...one of the reasons we never vote for Conservative’s budgets is that they cut staff to Service Canada and their budgets increase wait times for EI. We always oppose Conservative budgets that attack EI benefits. The minister is cutting the number of people hearing EI appeals from 700 to just 39...” (Parliament of Canada, December 7, 2012).

Diane Finley (CPC – governing political party) contradicts these statements, when she states:

“...the fact is that the NDP members vote against the good benefits under EI... They voted against bringing in special benefits for the self-employed so they could have access to the maternity, parental, compassionate and sickness benefits that other Canadians have...” (Parliament of Canada, December 7, 2012).

Later that day, Bruce Hyer (GP – opposition political party) notes that “...Service Canada’s Thunder Bay EI staff were laid off...” (Parliament of Canada, December 7, 2012). Greg Rickford (CPC – governing political party) responded by stating “...let us talk about who is helping whom in northern Ontario...” and then his response focused on trade markets and forestry sectors, before ending by saying “Thank goodness that northern Ontarians leave northern Ontario issues with this government.” (Parliament of Canada, December 7, 2012).

MILITARY AND VETERANS

Veterans Affairs Canada

In addition to the cuts mentioned above (related to Service Canada centres) the austerity measures proposed cuts to Veterans Affairs Canada, which included realigning a number of functions to other levels of government and other federal departments (such as transferring the

administration of veteran hospitals to provincial jurisdictions and transferring some functions to Service Canada). In October 2011, Mathieu Ravnat (NDP – opposition political party) first posed a question following what he accused was “...just more government rhetoric...” and questioned the governing political party’s plans to cut jobs at Veterans Affairs Canada. In response Eve Adams (CPC – governing political party) confirmed that the governing political party was focusing “...on improving efficiency, cutting red tape and improving services to veterans...” (Parliament of Canada, October 21, 2011). Through this exchange, we can see that the opposition political party is using the concept of “government rhetoric” to challenge the policy decisions made by the governing political party and to develop their position. Not surprisingly, the governing political party once again responds in order to highlight the need for improving service delivery and increased effectiveness. The governing political party’s opinion building centres around fiscal management and previously underutilized efficiencies.

Returning to this subject, about a month later, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) alleged that:

“...the budget cuts at the Department of Veterans Affairs are going to be deeper...” and that the last federally managed veterans hospital “...at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue...” was going to be transferred to the Government of Quebec, resulting in “...1,300 fewer employees in the department, in addition to the 500 employees being eliminated...” (Parliament of Canada, November 15, 2011).

Here the opposition political party appears to be claiming a position that sees the Government of Canada shifting responsibilities to a provincial authority, while also significantly reducing the number of public servants. Steven Blaney (CPC – governing political party) responded rather dryly and by stating that the priority “...is to serve veterans...” (Parliament of Canada, November 15, 2011). We can see that while the opposition political party is attempting to inflame the decisions surrounding the austerity measures, the governing political party does not appear to react with the same level of interest.

In the new year, the questions regarding the cuts to Veterans Affairs Canada were brought back to the forefront and Peter Stoffer (NDP – opposition political party) noted:

“...that it was not military and RCMP veterans and their families who put the country into deficit. Yet the government plans to cut 1,800 jobs from the Department of Veterans Affairs, thus cutting actual services to our brave heroes in this country...” (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012).

The opposition political party continues to frame their position with the employees and civil servants bearing the majority of the work required to balance the federal budget. In response, Eve Adams (CPC – governing political party) confirmed that “...under no circumstances are we making cuts to veterans. We are maintaining all benefits to veterans...” (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012). In this response, the governing political party is advising that there are no cuts to the services provided to veterans and their opinion is that they are able to maintain benefits to

veterans. In response to the governing political party's instance that they are not making cuts, Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) reiterated that:

“...the Conservatives plan to cut 500 jobs at Veterans Affairs...” and that with the transfer of a hospital to the Government of Quebec “...1,800 jobs will be lost...”; she later states that the governing political party “...is going to cut 40% of the staff at this department and it is promising to improve services for veterans. That is totally illogical...” (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012).

In taking an opportunity to respond, Eve Adams (CPC – governing political party) stated again that “...under no circumstances whatsoever will our veterans' services be compromised...” (Parliament of Canada, February 3, 2012). Through these exchanges, we see that the opposition political party continues to note the cuts in relation to the decrease in public servant employment and describes the governing political party's responses as “illogical”. All the while, the governing political party insists that the reduction of public servants will not decrease overall service delivery, though it does not provide details or explanations regarding how these service levels will remain unchanged with significantly fewer public servants.

Just a few months later, Sylvain Chicoine (NDP – opposition political party) stated that:

“...Canadian veterans have fought courageously for their country, yet this government keeps telling them that they have to take care of themselves. The decision to close nine Veterans Affairs offices will make things even more difficult for a huge number of

veterans and their families who need help. We recently learned that the number of suicides by military personnel rose in 2011. How can the government tell veterans to seek help online instead of talking to a real, live human being?” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2012).

With this statement, it appears that the opposition political party is both claiming a position and attempting to persuade or negotiate with the governing political party.

In response, Steven Blaney (CPC – governing political party) confirmed that his political party “...will continue to provide services to veterans across the country. We are even about to increase our service offerings near military bases and wherever the need is greatest.” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2012). As a follow-up, Peter Stoffer (NDP – opposition political party) retorts:

“...what absolute nonsense. He is now telling veterans on Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton Island that in order to see someone they have to go all the way to Halifax to meet the individual.”; in addition, he notes that the 1-800 number for veterans is actually a number for “...a private company called Quantum...” which “...gets over \$600,000 of tax money to say Veterans Affairs Canada.” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2012).

In responding, Steven Blaney (CPC – governing political party) begins to advise that Veterans Affairs is:

“...proud to work with Service Canada. It has employees here in this country, in the Atlantic, serving Canadians for general information...” at this point he is interrupted by “oh, oh!” from other honourable members and Steven Blaney continues by saying “Excuse me, kindergarten, I am speaking.”, which prompts additional “oh, oh!” interruptions from other honourable members; when he is able to finish his response, he states “...we are maintaining benefits. We are cutting red tape and we will continue to do so.” (Parliament of Canada, May 1, 2012).

In these exchanges it appears that the opposition political party is attempting to claim the position that the outsourcing of veteran services will have an impact on services to veterans, while the governing political party appears to dismiss (and barely acknowledge these accusations) by stating that they are able to maintain services and reduce administrative burdens. It is also noteworthy that this is one of the instances examined in this thesis, where parliamentarians were interrupted by their colleagues and was required to respond to the interruption (in this case acknowledging the interruption by referencing kindergartners).

Sylvain Chicoine (NDP – opposition political party) reinitiated the discussion regarding cuts by stating:

“...just as the NDP predicted, the Conservatives’ cuts to Veterans Affairs Canada are going to significantly reduce the services provided to the men and women who have bravely served this country... with over 800 full-time jobs being eliminated. At a time

when 35,000 soldiers who served in Afghanistan will be eligible for these services...”
(Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2012).

In this question, the opposition political party is attempting to flesh out a position that sees a looming increase in demand for veteran services, while the governing political party is laying-off hundreds of public servants. In responding, Steven Blaney (CPC – governing political party) stated:

“...it is very clear. What we are taking away from veterans are the millions of unnecessary transactions for veterans who need our services. We are simply cutting the red tape, cutting the routine and repetitive tasks that waste paper and in no way serve our veterans. That is what we are doing.” (Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2012).

Peter Stoffer (NDP – opposition political party) continued this discussion by stating:

“...once services are taken away, it will be impossible for a veteran to actually speak to someone in person. The government has this theory that veterans’ mental health issues can be solved over the Internet or maybe with a long distance phone call, which could be answered by a private company called Quantum, which answers the phone at Veterans Affairs Canada.” (Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2012).

Steven Blaney (CPC – governing political party) then responds by noting that his government has “...doubled the number of clinics. We have people working on the streets to help veterans.”

(Parliament of Canada, May 9, 2012). Through this exchange it is clear that the opposition political parties are adopting the position that the outsourcing of veteran services, and the simultaneous reduction in public servants, will irreversibly impact the services provided to veterans. In their response, the governing political party continues to build the opinion that there is too much “red tape” and that the services are not impacted.

On the subject of closing Veteran Services Offices, Mark Eyking (LIB – opposition political party) reported that:

“...a protest was held by veterans and their families over their outrage at the government’s decision to close the Veterans Affairs office in Sydney. In total, nine offices are to be closed across this country... The government needs to understand the importance of this in-person service. Veterans were there for us; no we need to be there for them...” (Parliament of Canada, November 21, 2012).

The opposition political party appears to be once again developing their position, based on support from stakeholders (in this case, veterans and their families). In response, Eve Adams (CPC – governing political party) advised that:

“...veterans will now receive services at five locations instead of the one location where they were previously receiving service. There will be no reduction in services to local veterans. In fact, those who require home services will continue to receive them. The

opposition is just trying to defend union interests. Here on this side of the House we actually defend veterans' interests..." (Parliament of Canada, November 21, 2012).

In December 2012, Sean Casey (LIB – opposition political party) noted that "...The Minister of Veterans Affairs plans to close our only district office and eliminate 800 jobs..." (Parliament of Canada, December 3, 2012). In response, Jason Kenney (CPC – governing political party) stated:

"...yes, it is true that, as part of our efforts to reduce operating expenses in order to reduce the deficit, we have decreased the number of offices. However, we have increased our online services to meet people's needs much more efficiently... Those are the kinds of results our government is achieving." (Parliament of Canada, December 3, 2012).

Then again in February 2013, Sean Casey (LIB – opposition political party) commented that:

"...Charlottetown had two big snow jobs this weekend, one from mother nature and the other from the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Backpedaling from closing nine district offices, the minister hatched a plan. He came to PEI under the cover of night. His mere presence, unannounced, amounted to a grim reaper moment, unnerving employees wondering what further misery he was bringing. True to form, as the minister of symbolism, he announced that he would open a wicket line for vets, calling it an access office..." (Parliament of Canada, February 11, 2013).

Steven Blaney (CPC – governing political party) responded to say he:

“...was really glad to meet with Mayor Clifford Lee... as well as many veterans at the Royal Canadian Legion. I also had good fish and chips in a local brewery. It is more than obvious. We have more than 1,000 great employees on the island, in Charlottetown, working for veterans. Is it not obvious that our veterans should have access to them?”

(Parliament of Canada, February 11, 2013).

Through these exchanges it appears that the opposition political party may have had some influence over the decision to close the veteran service centre on Prince Edward Island.

However, it is apparent that even when the governing political party was persuaded to keep access available (albeit through what was referred to as a modified “wicket line”) the opposition political party continued to press the governing political party on the overall position of closing in-person veteran service centres.

Department of National Defence

In addition to the cuts highlighted at the Department of Veterans Affairs, many members of Parliament raised issues regarding the cuts at the Department of National Defence. In November 2011, Éline Michaud (NDP – opposition political party) questioned the “...staff cuts at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier... because 1,400 civilians who work on the base might lose

their jobs...” (Parliament of Canada, November 28, 2011). In response, Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) stated that his political party is:

“...looking at individual efforts to find efficiencies...” and that they want to “...have the right people in the right place at the right cost to taxpayers...”; in addition he later states that “...as with issues related to families and businesses, the Government of Canada is continuing to review its resources in an effort to find effective solutions...” (Parliament of Canada, November 28, 2011).

Through this exchange, we can see that the opposition political party’s position is to question the cuts of civilian personnel at a Canadian Forces Base. In response to these questions the governing political party responds with a similar opinion discussion related to efficiencies and having the “right” people, costs, and in the “right” places.

Later that session, in March 2012, Christine Moore (NDP – opposition political party) stated that with “...secrecy and without explanation...” the governing political party was considering “...reductions in support staff on military bases...” and stated that “...approximately 700 jobs are slated to be eliminated...” (Parliament of Canada, March 12, 2012). In this case, the opposition political party appears to be generating a position that claims the governing political party is not being upfront and clear with the potential impacts on public servants and civilian personnel working for the Department of National Defence.

In response, Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) questioned that secrecy and speculation and said “It is called a budget...” and highlighted his political party’s “...historic investments in the Canadian Forces...” (Parliament of Canada, March 12, 2012). As a follow-up Matthew Kellway (NDP – opposition political party), reiterated that his political party has “...been raising this issue for a long time but cannot seem to get a straight answer from the government. Today, so far, is no exception.”, to which Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) repeated that his political party “...will continue to make investments in the Canadian Forces, as we have been since taking office...” (Parliament of Canada, March 12, 2012).

Less than a month later, Éline Michaud (NDP – opposition political party) raised the issue of staff on military bases after the release of the 2012 budget and confirmed that “...more than 1,000 jobs will be lost. In my riding CFB Valcartier will lose 150 jobs. That is huge.”; she also revisited her previous questions from November 2011 and noted that the governing political party “...accused me of not supporting the troops. Is cutting jobs his strategy for supporting the troops?” (Parliament of Canada, April 4, 2012). Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) began his response by stating “...that is not true, It is false, as usual.” and noted the “...return to a more normal operation tempo, and with the end of the Canadian Forces combat mission in Afghanistan...” (Parliament of Canada, April 4, 2012). The next day, Nycole Turmel (NDP – opposition political party) again noted that: “...the CBC is not the only organization to be hit by the Conservatives’ ideological cuts. Some 1,000 civilian employees at the Department of National Defence were the first to lose their jobs.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012). With no documented response, Paul Dewar (NDP – opposition political party) also stated “Killing over 1,000 jobs in the Department of National Defence hurts our military communities.”

(Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012). Again, with no documented response, Tarik Brahmi (NDP – opposition political party) stated: “The Conservatives claim to support our soldiers, yet they are eliminating 1,100 civilian jobs within the Department of National Defence. Furthermore, the government is warning that more cuts are coming.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012).

In response to these statements and questions, Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) starts by saying “...that is not correct. That is not accurate.” noting that “What we are seeing, of course, is a return to a normal tempo of operations after a very high, active tempo in Afghanistan.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012). Annick Papillon (NDP – opposition political party) continued this line of questioning and noted that “Nearly 350 jobs are going to be cut in the province [Quebec], nearly 200 of them in the Quebec City area alone.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012). Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) once again begins his response by stating “...first of all, a lot of what she has said is simply incorrect.” and again reiterated the “...returning to a normal state of being in terms of the department.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012). Randall Garrison (NDP – opposition political party) continued this line of questioning and noted that “...bases across the country, including CFB Esquimalt in my riding, are now the targets of mean-spirited Conservative cuts.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012). Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) responded to highlight his political party’s support for the military and stated that his political party “...will continue to support those brave citizens, both civilian and uniformed.” (Parliament of Canada, April 5, 2012).

On June 21, 2012, Tarik Brahmi (NDP – opposition political party) raised the issue of military cuts; he stated:

“...either the minister does not understand the file, or he truly thinks that Canadians are stupid. I would like to talk about other cuts that will directly affect the people of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and the economy of my entire region. According to the Union of National Defence Employees, 144 civilian jobs at the Saint-Jean military base are being eliminated...” (Parliament of Canada, June 21, 2012).

Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) responded to confirm that his party is

“...still investing in the military, including in its infrastructure across Canada. At the same time, we need to ensure our economy is balanced, while making important decisions that respect Canadian taxpayers...” (Parliament of Canada, June 21, 2012).

In October, Jack Harris (NDP – opposition political party) questioned “...a letter from the Conservative Prime Minister to the Minister of National Defence demanding the military be cut. This letter talks about reducing military and civilian personnel at National Defence...” (Parliament of Canada, October 25, 2012). In response, Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) states that:

“...the Canadian Forces budget has grown substantially each and every year since our government took office. We have invested in equipment. We have invested in our bases,

our infrastructure. We have invested in the size of our force, that is we have grown both the regular and reserve force...” (Parliament of Canada, October 25, 2012).

Jack Harris (NDP – opposition political party) responded by again highlighting that:

“...it is the Prime Minister who wants to cut defence spending, both military and civilian... Conservatives have promised 2% annual increases in the National Defence budget and now they have broken their word to the Canadian Forces...” (Parliament of Canada, October 25, 2012).

In his response, Peter MacKay (CPC – governing political party) starts by saying “...I would remind my colleague, as I just did, that we have seen the Canadian Forces grow substantially under this government. We have made key acquisitions...” (Parliament of Canada, October 25, 2012).

DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings remain surprising and as noted throughout this thesis, my initial expectations was that parliamentary exchanges would outline expectations of immediate savings and that after realizing the outcome of these cuts was actually increases to personnel expenditures, parliamentary exchanges would move away from discussions on savings and attempt to find new ways to justify the public service reductions. Instead of this ideological debate on the nature of cuts and the nature of neoliberal concepts, the parliamentary exchanges focused on events and context. The question then changed into an examination of how political

party members convey their support or opposition for these austerity measures, during the first session of the 41st Parliament Oral Question Period exchanges; in particular, how these exchanges are structured within the setting of parliamentary debate and for what purposes. In particular, in the context of parliamentary debate purposes presented by Ilie (2017) there was a focus on examining : 1) Position Claiming; 2) Agenda-Setting; 3) Opinion building; 4) Persuading ; and, 5) Negotiating. While parliamentarians focus almost exclusively on events, groups, and context when discussing cuts to the public service, it also becomes apparent that they utilize the same tactics across all of these themes. That is to say, when parliamentarians are structuring the exchanges to discuss cuts to the public service in a security context, there are similarities in their approach to structuring their exchanges in the context of official languages or regional concerns.

Ilie (2016 and 2017) and Proksch and Slapin (2014) discussed the notion that parliamentarians have a fundamental role to perform in decision making and weighing the various options before finalizing a decision (a notion of deliberative democracy), and since Proksch and Slapin (2014) also noted that this is not always the intent of parliamentary exchanges the structure of these debates is not entirely surprising. Proksch and Slapin (2014) go on to state that parliamentarians do not often engage in parliamentary exchanges to raise new policy/legislative approaches and in some instances they may not even expect a productive debate, instead the intent is this messaging to their political party and the voters. In this light, the silence regarding the broader discussion on cuts and the possible neoliberal ideological view that is behind these cuts is not overly surprising. Parliamentary questions are not always aimed at obtaining answers from parliamentarians, instead they are used to make the respondent uncomfortable and encourage them to respond in a

manner that is unflattering (Ilie, 2017). While this line of interrogation could lead to general ideas surrounding the deterioration of democratic systems and parliamentary debate, the context and scope of this thesis is not sufficient to address these ideas. That said, this thesis is able to represent a specific period in time and to act as a snap-shot of particular broad themes in relation parliamentary exchanges related to cuts to the public service, stemming from Budget 2012. That said, this idea that parliamentarians have a responsibility both to the voters and their own political party, and the structure of these exchanges described in this thesis is not entirely unsurprising. Accusations from opposition political parties that the governing political party was using speaking notes or even assertions from the governing political party that they had already answered the question, both underline this responsibility to party, rather than to ideological ideas and concepts.

In the broad sense of a responsibility to present an image of the political party, the governing political party appears to be aware of this and does appear to rely on speaking notes or prefabricated responses that speak to a topic, though do not necessarily respond to the question. It was also not uncommon to see the governing political party repeat the same response or claim to have already responded (despite the response not actually dealing with question and only being related to the topic). On the other hand, a similar political party responsibility can also be seen when examining exchanges from the opposition political parties who instead of focusing on the nature or ideology behind the austerity measures, or even the efficacy of those measures, they focused on criticizing the governing political party, while using themes and events (such as veterans, seafarers, the unemployed, francophones, marine accidents, facility closures, and geographical regions) as the basis for their critiques. Again, political party members did not

really engage in significant exchanges regarding the nature of the cuts or the impacts on the public service (or even the value of the public service). This general concept of deliberative democracy, that was noted by both Ilie (2016 and 2017) as well as Proksch and Slapin (2014) does not emerge through the parliamentary exchanges examined through this thesis.

In the security section, we can see that opposition political parties utilize a number of means to claim the position that the governing political party's austerity measures will have negative impacts. The first is to ensure that the opposition political party claims the position that these austerity measures will have an impact on marine safety. One of the most common was to describe the austerity measures as "senseless, reckless, hasty, and dangerous" (Parliament of Canada, June 14, 2011), which is unsurprising since the austerity measures could have (and in some cases the opposition political party made a case that they already impacted) the security of Canadians. In addition, the opposition political party also claimed the position that these safety issues were compounded by the closure of established centres and the terminating of public service employment. The position emphasized that these public servants had experience and skills that would be lost and that the retraining of new staff and public servants could have direct impacts on the safety of mariners. Not only does the opposition political party use this language to cast a negative light on the austerity measures proposed by the governing political party, they also use references from experts, stakeholders and public servants to support their opinion that the austerity measures are not well developed and could impact the safety of Canadians. Within this section, the opposition political parties invoked opposition from the City of Vancouver, experts in marine safety, the British Columbia Premier, as well as referencing an Assistant

Commissioner who opposed the closure of facilities (and claiming that this individual was removed from their position).

Opposition political parties also used a strategy or communication performance that saw the same subject matter and questions repeated in very short periods of time (as noted, sometimes question and response periods, regarding the closure of Coast Guard facilities, could last approximately 13 minutes). This strategy appears to have made the governing party frustrated with the questions. In conjunction with this approach, the opposition political parties also accused the governing political party of referencing speaking points or speaking notes (something that the governing political party regularly quipped back to the opposition political party). With regards to accusing a political party of using speaking points, and since it was used by both governing and opposition political parties, it should be noted that it is not likely the preparedness that is being criticized, instead it appears that they are criticizing the nature of the response, which appears to be rehearsed and impersonal. That is true when, the governing political party responds by noting that they have already answered the question; here it serves to both dismiss the question as redundant, while also confirming that any concerns raised by the opposition political party have already been resolved or addressed.

In general, the opinions built by the governing political party appear to dismiss the opposition political parties, either by establishing (perhaps in a frustrated response) that the question being posed has already been addressed or by noting that the opposition political party was once a governing political party who failed to improve the current situation. While these frustrated or deflective responses are common, one other important aspect becomes clear. Despite the

opposition political parties referencing two tragedies that could be impacted or may have been impacted by the governing political party's austerity measures, the governing political party's responses overwhelmingly note that there was no change in safety and that the governing political party had a responsibility for taxpayers and the governing political party's role in finding and exploiting efficiencies to find cost savings.

In the section regarding official languages, we can see that the opposition political parties develop a position that revolves around the Quebec City facility closure and the impacts on French-language capacity on marine safety. Early into the discussion, these focus on the closure of Canada's only bilingual marine centre and the impacts that this will have on Canadian mariners (particularly francophone populations). Since the closures involved amalgamating operations with centres in Trenton and Halifax, and since these regions are predominantly anglophone, the opposition political parties focused their critiques on the language capacity. In narrowing down and claiming their position, the opposition political parties relied on experts (such as the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Corporation of Mid-St. Lawrence Pilots), as well as broader stakeholders (often referencing residents and constituents). For the majority of the responses, the governing political party opted to use language such as "changes" or "consolidation" instead of "closure". The closure of the Quebec City facility was also noted as "new operations" and the governing political party continued to ensure that the bilingual capacity would be maintained. It is noted that while the governing political party continued to state that the linguistic capacity would be maintained, the details of how this would be accomplished were not provided (instead the responses were statements that the bilingual capacity would be maintained, without directly addressing the concerns raised by the opposition political parties).

In fact, in many instances the governing political party would continue to state that the answer had already been provided and would reference previous statements (again statements that simply stated the maintenance of bilingual capacity, without providing details, agendas or direction).

If we focus on the section related to Regional Cuts, the opposition political parties continued to reference the recklessness of the cuts and how these regional cuts could jeopardize regional issues (whether economic development, fisheries and ocean management, or regionalized Service Canada and Employment Insurance processing). Another aspect that was developed by opposition political parties was the concept of political patronage or preferential treatment of regions/ridings that voted for the governing political party. Opposition political parties claimed that hiring practices (or possibly the granting of funds to regional organization for hiring purposes) were influenced by the governing political party. In other cases, the opposition political parties claimed that centres and offices in ridings that did not vote for the governing political party were being punished, while simultaneously rewarding ridings that did vote for the governing political party.

In all cases the governing political party remained focused on highlighting the efficiencies and balanced budget that would result from the austerity measures. In many cases the governing political party referenced other jurisdictions (such as Greece) to act as a kind of cautionary tale; that is, we must cut now to prevent a similar situation in Canada. However, in developing their opinions and outlining their set agenda, the governing political party did talk more about the specific cuts to the regions than in the previous sections. In responding to a number of the

questions, the governing political party did provide specific figures and outline the agenda for achieving the desired results (for instance, attrition rates being higher than the cuts to the numbers of public servants).

Regarding the section on Military and Veterans cuts, the opposition political party continued to claim the position that cuts to the public service will result in reduced services to veterans. In addition, they also advanced the position that even if these services are outsourced to a private company, the in-person services that were offered by the veteran service centres will be lost. As already seen in previous sections, the opposition political party also evoked the opposition from veterans and their families when developing their positions that the closure of the veterans service centres would have an impact on the services provided to veterans. These protests from veterans and their families were emphasized by the opposition political parties, since there was an anticipated influx of eligible veterans from Afghanistan. Even when the governing political party decided to maintain a “wicket” option on Prince Edward Island, the opposition political party still claimed their position that this concession would not be sufficient. In terms of civilian cuts at the Department of National Defence, the opposition political parties continued to claim a position that opposed these cuts and highlighted the reduced services. In response to these opposition claims, the governing political party continued to build their opinion that there were no fewer services, as a result of the cuts. In several instances, the governing political party made a point to emphasize the significant investments that they made into veterans and defence spending. The governing political party continued to emphasize the need to reduce “red tape” and find efficiencies. This opinion building surrounding the finding and exploiting of efficiencies

is repeated throughout this thesis and appears to serve as the backbone for almost all of the discussions surrounding the austerity measures and public service cuts.

Some of the tactics that became apparent during this examination included interruptions of parliamentary exchanges. In the findings presented above, it was apparent that in several instances parliamentarians disrupted responses or questions from other parliamentarians. Often this was captured in the Hansard transcripts as in the middle of a question or response. While the parliamentarian was often found to respond a few moments later, this larger act of disruption responds to the performative measures discussed by Ilie (2016 and 2017), as well as the requirements and expectations of parliamentarians' own political parties that Proksch and Slapin (2014) described. In addition, and while opposition political parties were often tasked with presenting a question for the governing political party, we have seen that these questions were often leading or accusatory in nature. The intention of these questions did not often appear to be related to the probing of Ministers for answers to questions, nor did they appear to be aimed at negotiating or persuading public policy or future legislation, instead they appeared to be platforms for parliamentarians to present a viewpoint or convey a message on behalf of their own political party. Portraying this tactic as an aim to support/develop a political party relationship is also supported when it is clear that parliamentarians from the same political party use their allotted time during the Oral Question Period to ask the same/similar accusatory/leading questions to the governing political party. The sometimes-rapid series of exchanges on the same subject are less likely to be a random occurrence and instead appear to be a tactic employed by the political party to develop a message or position. Related to this, these tactics could also be in response to the governing political party's use of speaking points that do not always respond to

the question (or accusation) from the opposition political party. Whether the governing political party engaged in these prefabricated responses in an attempt to control messaging or whether these were to control parliamentarians from expressing their own thoughts on a subject, is not clear. However, when examining the Hansard transcripts of the Oral Question Period, the repetitive and prefabricated nature of these responses becomes apparent and it could be that the opposition political parties utilized a series of exchanges on the same subject to highlight this prefabricated response trend that was employed by the governing political party.

CONCLUSION

As previously noted, Ilie (2017) confirms that parliamentary questions are not always aimed at obtaining answers from parliamentarians, instead they are used to make the respondent uncomfortable and encourage them to respond in a manner that is unflattering. Through the examination of Hansard records related to Security, Official Languages, Regional Cuts, as well as Veterans and Military cuts to the public service and other broader austerity measures, it is clear that parliamentarians worked diligently to claim their own positions (or those of their political party), negotiate or persuade their parliamentary counterparts, as well as build opinions and define agendas. The Hansard Oral Question Period exchanges analyzed throughout this thesis offer insight into how legislators attempt to define their own political groups, create meaning, portray themselves, portray others, evaluate the relationships between different institutions, legitimize claims/actions, and provide context. As a general rule, opposition political parties will initiate a question through Hansard to emphasize the negative aspects of the governing political party's platform (marine safety, regional cuts, reduced services, and cuts to the public service). However, as a response to these negative aspects, the governing political

party typically relies on confirming their political party's already established opinion; that is, it appears that they consistently emphasize that there is no reduction in services, safety, or linguistic capacity (or other area of interest), alternatively they claim that there are efficiencies that are being exploited to justify the reduction ("red tape"), and/or they rely on the limits of fiscal or financial management (balanced budgets or deficit reduction).

When reviewing this project through lens of austerity, and aside from general statements regarding efficiencies, the Hansard records do not appear to directly address this concept or the broader nature of the austerity measures as a whole. Instead, parliamentarians choose to focus on critiques of safety, lack of planning, reduced supports for Canadians, or impacts on linguistic capacity. At the onset of this study it was expected that austerity would form a larger part of the parliamentary debates and it is surprising that these parliamentary exchanges did not wade deeper into the underlying austerity assumptions. It was noted early on that Ross and Savage (2014) described modern austerity measures as a series of political actions in service to the wealthy and those who partner or have vested interests in ensuring the continuation of benefits for the upper classes; it was also noted that Smith (1993) described the relationship between ruling apparatuses that organize social life, such as institutions like parliament, where national rules are created. Therefore, it was unexpected to find that the parliamentarians (in their institution of power) did not discuss or address the austerity measures. That is, instead of focusing on the nature of the measures, or even the efficacy of those measures, they focused on criticizing other political parties, while using tangible groups (such as veterans, seafarers, the unemployed, francophones, regions, and etcetera) as the basis for their critiques.

This lack of acknowledgement or ownership of the austerity measures is even more noteworthy when it becomes clear that discussions of public choice theory already highlights that reducing wages, prices, and government spending does not reduce debt and does not promote growth (Bel, Fageda, and Warner, 2010; Blyth, 2013; Boyne, 1998; Domberger and Jensen, 1997; Hefetz and Warner, 2004; Warner, and Hefetz, 2008; Warner, 2008; Hirsh, 1995; McMaster & Sawkins, 1996; Poister, Pasha, and Hamilton-Edwards, 2013; Rho, E., 2013). Throughout this thesis, we discovered that political actors and Canadian parliamentarians do not always directly question the value of the austerity measures, even when they are actively engaged in critiquing or defending those measures. In terms of broad themes, political party members also used interesting language to address these themes/events, with the opposition political parties generally attempting to diminish the value of the cuts by using language such as: Blind cuts; Ridding public service of its best and brightest; Making it up as you go; Cut and slash; Rash cuts; Reckless cuts; Corporate tax give aways; Gutted services/infrastructure; Dangerous cuts; Irresponsible cuts; and, Attack on Atlantic families. While the governing political party highlighting fiscal (prudence/rationalizing/efficiency) and also using the theme to insert other buzz words including: Proceeding prudently; Rationalizing service delivery; Efficient for law-abiding Canadians; Finding efficiencies; Grow economy; and, Spend tax dollars wisely.

Overall, it appears that political parties in Canada structure their exchanges in the Oral Question Period to realign messaging. Furthermore, the ideological exchanges that may result in improved policies/legislation do not appear in the data set examined as part of this thesis. While it was initially thought that the thought-provoking examination would occur around expectations that parliamentarians would defend cuts to the public service by outlining expectations of immediate

savings; then it was anticipated that once it was realized that there were increasing personnel expenditures, parliamentary exchanges would move away from discussions on savings and attempt to find new ways to justify the public service reductions. However, these anticipated governing political party ideological justifications were replaced with assertions of money management and rationalization that did not focus on the cuts to the public service. In addition, and it was anticipated that the opposition political parties would then realign the parliamentary exchanges to outline the ideological importance of public service or the ideological fallacy confirmed in the examination of Public Choice Theory; that is, contrary to some perceived common sense assumptions, reductions in the public do not necessarily create savings or improved services (see: Bel, Fageda, and Warner, 2010; Boyne, 1998; Domberger and Jensen, 1997; Hefetz and Warner, 2004; Warner, and Hefetz, 2008; Warner, 2008; Hirsh, 1995; McMaster & Sawkins, 1996; Poister, Pasha, and Hamilton-Edwards, 2013; Rho, E., 2013). Instead we saw these opposition political parties focus their Oral Question Period exchanges on broad events, themes and contexts in what could be perceived as an opportunistic attack on the governing political party. In either case, the structure of the opposition political party exchanges appear to serve the same purpose as the exchanges constructed by the governing political party: to send messages to voters and align parliamentarians with political party viewpoints, while not necessarily contributing to the improvement of public policy or to the development of well-thought-out legislation.

While it was already established that this thesis would not seek to respond to the policy issues at hand or to take on a political message, this thesis does contribute to the body of literature in the following ways:

1. It provides a body of literature that details an important political moment in Canadian history and frames this discussion through the capturing of the governing political party and the opposition political parties Hansard records.
2. Acts as a basis of future comparative studies that may want to further examine ideological debates in the Canadian parliament.
3. Enables future researchers to develop a political or policy basis for future studies.
4. Provides public servants (such as myself) with a lens through which we can examine political issues and political actors without engaging in a political activity.

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