Report

Conservative Populism or Unpopular Liberalism? Review of the 2018 Ontario Provincial Election

Andrea M.L. Perrella
Wilfrid Laurier University – Email address: aperrella@wlu.ca

Simon J. Kiss
Wilfrid Laurier University – Email address: skiss@wlu.ca

Barry J. Kay
We are sad to note that Dr. Barry Kay passed away in December of 2019. He contributed to this review and had over the years provided much sought-after insight into election campaign dynamics.

Abstract

Ontario's general election on June 7, 2018, brought the Progressive Conservative party to government for the first time in the 21st Century. The PCs' victory over the incumbent Liberals, however, reached this point despite much turmoil. Months before the election the party faced a crisis when its leader, Patrick Brown, resigned amid a scandal. The PC party hastily organized a leadership election that put Doug Ford at the helm, who then led the party to victory. The following election review traces these steps and looks at some dynamics that contributed to both the PC leadership vote and the overall result of the election. The PC leadership election is analyzed, providing evidence that Ford's rise may reflect some of the populist sentiment that has gripped other democracies. The analysis then turns to the general election, focusing on media coverage and issue salience, particularly as they relate to the party leaders. Survey data are examined to build some explanatory vote-choice models, which shows that voters in the general election appeared less moved by populism than a desire to punish the Liberals.

Résumé:

L'élection générale du 7 juin 2018 en Ontario a amené le Parti progressiste-conservateur au gouvernement pour la première fois au 21ème siècle. La victoire des Conservateurs sur les Libéraux, le parti sortant, a eu lieu malgré de nombreuses difficultés. Quelques mois avant les élections, le parti était mêlé à une crise lorsque son chef, Patrick Brown, a démissionné au milieu d'un scandale. Le parti a organisé à la hâte une campagne de leadership et ainsi placé Doug Ford comme chef, qui a ensuite mené le parti à la victoire à l'élection générale. Cette analyse retrace ces étapes et examine certaines dynamiques qui ont contribué à la fois au vote à la direction du parti progressiste conservateur et au résultat de l'élection générale. La campagne du leadership du parti est analysée, fournissant des preuves que la montée de Ford peut refléter une partie du sentiment populiste qui a saisi d'autres démocraties. L'analyse porte ensuite sur l'élections générale, en se concentrant sur la couverture médiatique et la saillance des enjeux, en particulier en ce qui concerne les chefs des partis. Les données d'un sondage sont examinées pour construire des modèles explicatifs de comportement électorale, et qui montre que pendant l'élection générale, les électeurs étaient motivés à punir les Libéraux, plutôt que de suivre des sentiment populistes.

Keywords: Doug Ford, 2018 Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario leadership election, 2018 Ontario general election

Mots-clés: Doug Ford, élection 2018 à la direction du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario, Élections générales ontariennes de 2018

Introduction

The 2018 Ontario provincial general election was remarkable in many respects. Shockingly, the Progressive Conservative Party – leading in the polls for years – suddenly replaced its leader, Patrick Brown, with one-time Toronto city councillor Doug Ford just weeks before the election was called. Moreover, the long-dominant Ontario Liberal Party, under leader Kathleen Wynne, saw its support collapse to near historic lows, while for the fifth time in the province's 150-year history, the Ontario NDP won enough seats to serve as the Official Opposition.[1] Moreover, for the first time ever in a general election, the Green Party of Ontario won its first seat, reflecting and possibly foreshadowing increasing support for that party in other provinces and at the federal level.

The way in which this election serves as a watershed is reflected in the turnout. More than 5.7 million votes were cast in 2018, an increase of more than 924,000 from 2014. This raised the voter turnout rate to 57 percent, a five-point jump from the previous general election (see Figure 1). Much of this increase benefited the PCs, which gained 820,000 more votes to reach a total of about 2.3 million, accounting for 40.5 percent of the vote (see Table 1). The Liberals lost almost 740,000 votes and captured less than 20 percent of the vote. The NDP did better in 2018 with 1.9 million votes, the highest ever vote count for the party, resulting in 40 seats, its best showing since its surprising 1990 election win. Some of the smaller parties also saw an increase in voter support, particularly the Green Party. In 2018, more than 360,000 votes were cast for smaller parties or independent candidates, an increase of almost 58,000 from 2014, with the Greens in particular seeing an overall increase of more than 28,000 votes and winning a seat in the Ontario legislature for the very first time. Party leader, Mike Schreiner, was elected in Guelph with 29,000 votes, comprising 45 percent of the ballots cast. Overall, however, the Green's share of the overall vote declined marginally from 2018 to 2014.

One conclusion from these global numbers suggests many voters were looking for an alternative. The anti-Liberal vote, which was pronounced in 2018, split in various directions. While the PCs handily won the election, they did not fully exploit this anti-incumbent sentiment, with many voters taking a chance on other parties. Part of this may be due to the PCs' less than stellar campaigning. But it also may have reflected the risky and polarizing choice the party made in selecting Doug Ford as its leader. Arguably, the PCs' win, their first in the 21st century, was less about their effective campaigning than ultimately about fatigue towards the Liberals.

Poor PC campaigning has been a consistent interpretation of how the Liberals have been able to win majorities in 2007, 2011, and 2014 (Perrella et al., 2008; Kiss, Perrella, and Kay, 2014; Perrella, Kiss and Kay, 2017). The Liberals' string of luck was about to repeat during the 2018 campaign when the stumbling PCs seemed poised, yet again, to squander their poll leads and end up with another failed campaign. Again, the campaign at times – though not the final outcome – seemed less about how much the electorate did not want to re-elect the Liberals than about some of the vulnerabilities of the PCs. It did not have to be that way, as the PCs under leader Patrick Brown were comfortably leading the polls for quite some time before the start of the campaign. This lead was risked on January 24, 2018, when Brown resigned amid allegations of sexual impropriety, throwing the party into an expedited leadership campaign five months before the general election.

Nonetheless, the PC membership elected Ford as its leader, and he rode the party's wave of popularity to a successful outcome on Election Day, securing the PCs' first general election victory since 1999. Not only that, the 2018 election reduced the Liberals to seven seats, failing to qualify for official party status in the Ontario legislature (as of then eight seats were needed). It was a humiliating and historic defeat.
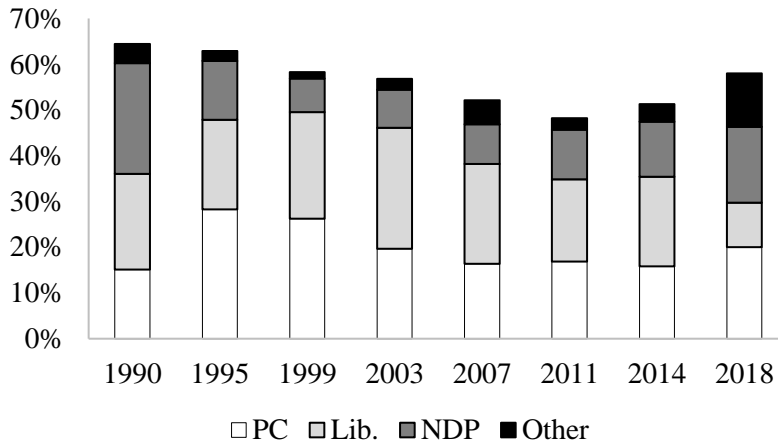
Figure 1: Voter turnout by party, 1990-2018

Table 1: Vote and seat results in 2014 and 2018

	2018		2014	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Liberal	19.6%	7	38.7%	58
PC	40.5%	76	31.2%	28
NDP	33.6%	40	23.8%	21
Green	4.6%	1	4.8%	0
Other	1.7%	0	1.5%	0

What was different this time? What helped the PCs break through with the electorate? It was not as if the PCs had no vulnerabilities. As noted, they walked into the 2018 campaign with plenty of controversy, and Ford came to this high public office with many controversies of his own. Yet, he was able to win the leadership of the party and ultimately the premiership of Ontario. And maybe he won in spite of his public image, part of which was built during his tenure as a Toronto city councillor, alongside his late brother Rob, who served as Toronto mayor and whose controversial behaviour drew international attention. But we may be in a different political era, one where voters place less value on diplomatic approaches to resolving collective questions, and more on disruptive, even abusive, leaders who may symbolize a population's rage. This may explain why we are seeing populist leaders emerge elsewhere in democratic societies, and why, as with Rob Ford before him, Doug Ford's rise to office in Ontario may qualify as part of the same trend (see Kiss, Perrella and Spicer, 2019).

Arguably, Ford's race to the top of the PC leadership was more challenging than the actual general election, as he went up against seasoned and well-connected contenders.

Therefore, this review of the 2018 Ontario election begins with the PC leadership race. It seeks to offer some glimpses into the populist mood that propelled Ford to the leadership, and that saw much of the Ontario electorate trounce the incumbent Liberals.

The remainder of this report looks at the general-election campaign, focusing on public opinion and media coverage of the issues. Vote-choice analysis makes use of an Ipsos election-day online survey of more than 4,000 respondents, who were asked a broad range of questions.[2] The survey is used to paint a portrait of the campaign and how it unfolded. Some common vote-choice factors will be examined, including those that consider circumstances unique to the 2018 campaign.

PC Leadership

The period before the official launch of a general election campaign is normally the calm before the storm, when much internal energy is expended by parties. Riding associations are organized to ensure candidates are nominated; the ground team is being put in place; voter records are collected to help get-out-the-vote efforts. The last thing a party needs is to implode and project an image of incompetence or to be seen as being led by unsavoury characters.

And yet, the PCs found themselves in such a worst-case scenario. While the party was riding high in the polls amid this pre-campaign calm, accusations of sexual harassment emerged against Patrick Brown, forcing him to resign as leader on January 25, barely six months prior to the scheduled fixed-date election on June 7.

Doug Ford wasted little time to announce his candidacy on January 29, the first to do so. He was not the only other high-profile candidate. Christine Elliott, who had twice previously sought the party's leadership, announced her candidacy February 1. She was considered the "establishment" candidate, having been elected as an MPP in 2006 and having served as deputy leader from 2009 to 2015. She also enjoyed the most support from the PC caucus. Caroline Mulroney announced on February 4, and while a newcomer, she already benefitted from some name recognition, given that her father is former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. In addition, Mulroney was at the time the nominated PC candidate for the York-Simcoe constituency. The fourth candidate, and the least well-known, was Tanya Granic Allen, who announced her bid on February 14. In general, her policy positions focused mainly on her opposition to the 2015 revised Ontario health curriculum (a.k.a., the "sex ed" curriculum).[3]

The expedited campaign included two televised debates in February, featuring all four candidates, and a third radio debate on March 1, featuring all but Mulroney, who had declined to participate. Often, the debates displayed heated exchanges and touched on topics on how to address, modify, or repeal the sitting Liberal government's legislative record on topics such as the sex-ed curriculum, the cap-and-trade carbon-reduction system, and the raising of the minimum wage. These debates drew some sharp lines between the candidates, with Ford and Granic Allen clearly further to the right, Mulroney showing more moderate views, while Elliott sought the middle ground. The middle ground was probably wise as polls often gave Elliott the lead. But her lead narrowed as Ford caught up, with the two candidates appearing to be in a statistical tie towards the end of the campaign (Kerr, 2018; Mainstreet Research, 2018a, 2018b). Ultimately, though, the leadership was selected not by popular vote. While Ford won the leadership, Elliott actually won more votes. As will be described in

the next section, this perverse electoral outcome was a result of the party's constituency-based voting system.

Leadership election

Unlike a traditional delegated convention, the PC's constitution is predicated on a system of one-member-one-vote. Ontario residents who held a PC party membership by February 16 were eligible to vote in the March 10 leadership election. Ballots were cast online.

Members voted according to a preferential ballot structure (i.e., ranked ballot), and the formula used was one where all 124 constituencies in Ontario hold the same weight of 100 points, or 100 electoral votes. In theory, this amounts to a total of 12,400 points. Within each riding, candidates are accorded points based on the percentage of votes they obtain. If at the end of one round no candidate wins a majority of points, the ballots of the last-placed candidate are re-distributed according to the next-ranked choice. This continues until someone wins the majority of electoral points.[4]

After the first round, Elliott came in first, with 23,237 votes, which transformed into 4,187 electoral points, far short of a majority. Ford was in second place with 20,363 votes (4,091 points), and Mulroney in third with 11,099 votes (2,107 points). Granic Allen came in last with 9,344 votes (1882 points) and was thus eliminated. A big question at the time was whether many of her votes would go to Ford. There were observations that both occupied similar electoral space by taking similar stands against the revised health curriculum and the cap-and-trade system (Cohn, 2018; Kotsis, 2018), and thus while Granic Allen was the "fringe" candidate, she was also seen as Ford's potential kingmaker.

The second round showed that, indeed, Ford benefitted from Granic Allen's elimination. In the second round, Elliott maintained her lead, growing by only 900 votes, while Ford increased his by almost 7,500. Mulroney, too, saw only very modest gains. She came in third and was eliminated after the second round.

The third and final round was a head-to-head between Elliott and Ford, and here results were delayed while some ballots were being examined more closely to determine if they were assigned to their proper constituency (Blackwell, Selley and Jackson, 2018). In the end, Ford won, but only by a razor-thin margin of electoral points, 6,202 over Elliott's 6,049. But Elliott received 2,000 more votes than Ford. The electoral formula showed that while Elliott had slightly greater appeal among all PC voting members, the more geographically widespread support enjoyed by Ford was what helped him with his ultimate victory. He also seems to have done better within constituencies with fewer PC memberships. The correlation of the number of total ballots cast and the percentage of the second-round votes share yields a Pearson's r of -.405 (p<.001) for Ford, compared to .397 (p<.001) for Elliott.

In some ways, Ford's victory can be called Trumpian, as Donald Trump, too, secured the presidency of the United States by winning more state-level electoral college votes than actual votes from the nation-wide electorate. But the similarities between the two do not stop there. Ford, who has publicly expressed some praise for Trump, can be said to be an Ontario version of the same populist political character sweeping the industrialized world. He appealed to voters who have grown weary of mainstream politics and mainstream politicians. Part of this appeal was an attack against political "elites," who were never clearly defined, but at times were more narrowly referred to as "downtown Toronto elites"

(Rushowy and Benzie, 2018). This was one line of argument that Ford used to draw a contrast with the other candidates.

As noted, the Ford brothers in Ontario are not unique. They form part of an international trend of "strong-man" leaders who win elections by appealing to an angry electorate. But what are voters angry about? From where do such characters emerge? While it is outside the mandate of this review to offer any definitive answer, there are some testable hypotheses. First, ethnic scapegoating is one argument used to explain the rise of populism. As observed in many places around the world, the rise of populists seems to coincide with the large migrations of refugees (Dinas and Van Spanje, 2011). Former candidate to lead the federal Conservative party, Kellie Leitch, drew controversy with her suggestion that prospective new Canadians must abide by some "values" test (Zimonjic, 2017). Further south, Donald Trump has, on many occasions, singled out Muslims, Mexicans, and other ethnic groups as a source of crime and terrorism, so the ethnic argument has some apparent basis. More recently Canada has seen "Yellow Vests" protests targeting immigration and refugees (Issawi 2019). In addition, Canada, over a span of several decades, has enacted legislation that is clearly very culturally liberal. The legalization of same-sex marriage is one such example. Some argue that the rise of populism is a counter-cultural response to advances made in liberal policy domains (Ignazi, 1992; Inglehart, 2008; Kaufman, 2017). Many Canadians, including those who are religious, still oppose same-sex marriage, and would likely gravitate towards political leaders who wish to turn back the clock.

Within this conservative movement are others who wish to see greater regulations – if not an outright ban – on abortion. For example, PC member for Niagara West, Sam Oosterhoff, is a vocal opponent to abortion and proudly espouses social conservative views (Ferguson, 2016). And, as mentioned, there are those who take issue with components of modernized sexual education curricula taught to elementary school children, not least of which was PC leadership candidate Granic Allen. The legalization of marijuana is also a very new installment to this liberalization program. A populist movement can form as a backlash against these liberal reforms, and types such as Doug Ford are able to argue that they are willing to uproot the state apparatus that supports such liberal (and quite often, uppercase "L" Liberal) policy reforms.

An alternative – but not mutually exclusive – possible cause of populism is economic strife. Fundamental changes to economic structures have eroded systems of support and have led to a stagnation of wages (see, for example, Jacobs, 2007; Piketty, 2014; Wroe, 2014, 2016). While current unemployment rates tend to be low, the actual quality of jobs and their pay are far removed from decades ago. This is partly due to the decline of unionized manufacturing jobs, displaced by either automation or cheaper labour in the developing world. The bulk of "working class" jobs that remain are in service industries (e.g., retail) which normally do not pay well. Without doubt, the current economic structure is challenging for those who might classify as "working class." But this is not a new phenomenon. Historically, there have been such cycles in the past, and such periods of economic upheaval have prefaced populist movements (Lipset, 1960). In sum, voters are justifiably angry. They are thus prone to latch on to an angry political narrative.

With this in mind, we looked for any signs of cultural backlash or economic strife that can explain Doug Ford's rise to the leadership of the PC party, and his eventual victory over the general electorate. An analysis was undertaken using riding-level data from the second-ballot round.[5] This second ballot featured three distinct candidates. Arguably, among the

three main leadership candidates, Doug Ford was the furthest to the right. His campaign focus on attacking "political elites" and pledging to empower "hard-working taxpayers" is an example of a right-wing populist brand (Crawley, 2018).

In contrast, Caroline Mulroney seems furthest to the left. She has some appeal to the PC party's more progressive membership (Fitzpatrick, 2018; Green, 2018), has taken fairly moderate views (relatively speaking) on matters such as minimum wage (Loriggio and Jeffords, 2018), and did not declare any serious opposition to the PC's previous, and fairly centrist, *People's Guarantee* platform prepared under former leader Patrick Brown. In some cases, she has promised to go even further. For instance, on the topic of long-term nursing home beds, Mulroney promised to add 30,000 within five years, double what had been promised in the *People's Guarantee*, and six times more than what the incumbent Liberals promised (Reevely, 2018).

Christine Elliott falls somewhere in the middle. The main thrust of her campaign was her experience. But like Ford, she opposed carbon taxes and expressed concerns about the revised health curriculum as it relates to sexual education. And similar to Mulroney, she was not opposed to raising the minimum wage, albeit at a more gradual pace (Werner, 2018).

This contrast, while not perfect, offers a rough model of a general election among the three major parties, each staking similarly distinct ideological grounds. Without doubt, the three PC candidates here clustered more closely together and faced a membership that was also likely clustered more closely ideologically, in contrast to the wider ideological space separating the three major parties that appealed to an electorate that was likely as diverse politically. Nonetheless, it can be seen whether certain characteristics are more likely to explain support for one type of candidate or another.

Methodology

Constituency-level vote results from the leadership election is used to identify some correlates to candidate support. Added to these vote results are Census 2016 data for the new federal electoral districts (which are mostly identical to Ontario's new electoral districts).[6] Four key census measures are appended.

First is the unemployment rate, which ranges among the Ontario ridings from three to eight percent. Unemployment is a common measure in vote research, and has been associated with support for or against an incumbent governing party. But it does tend to reflect short-term dynamics. It may explain variations of support among more "mainstream" candidates (Perrella, 2005). Some evidence suggests rising unemployment rates shift voters increasingly towards candidates and parties of the left (Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck, 2013). In any case, unemployment rates do not normally reflect deep-rooted economic malaise, as unemployment assumes a person is actually looking for work and that there is work to be found. Unemployment rises when a plant temporarily lays off a shift, or when individuals are between jobs. Certainly, areas with higher levels of unemployment suggest worse economic conditions. But the rate, itself, may not necessarily reflect a deeper level of economic decay.

A second economic measure is labour force participation. The labour force participation rate is a good indicator of fundamental economic health, with quite a broad range across Ontario. Census data for riding-level participation rates range from 50 to 90 percent (based on population aged 15 years and older, 25 percent sample of Census). In some cases, people

withdraw because of retirement, disability, or because they are enrolled in a full-time education program. But low rates often reflect the extent to which individuals withdraw from the workforce, often referred to as "discouraged workers" (see Jones and Riddell, 2019). Individuals who have endured an extended period of unemployment may simply give up looking for work, and thus register as not participating in the workforce. In this light, lower levels of participation may reflect deep economic malaise, and this can render individuals in such areas receptive to a populist narrative (Speer, 2017).

In addition to economic measures, we also track a constituency's proportion of visible minorities. Much has been discussed about the subtle – and sometimes not-so-subtle – racism underpinning populist movements (Associated Press, 2017). It is not clear whether Doug Ford is a genuine populist, but it is even less obvious whether his movement appeals to racist sentiment. His home constituency of Etobicoke has a high concentration of immigrants and visible minorities. Also, when his late brother Rob was mayor of Toronto, Rob drew much of his support from visible minorities. This may reflect a brand of populism that simultaneously appeals to a work ethic that looks at civil servants and the broader public service as lazy and exploitive of taxpayers (Doolittle, 2014). Nonetheless, given the increasingly diverse population, it is a worthy measurement. Ridings in Ontario vary quite considerably on this measure, ranging from a low of 5 percent to a high of 90 percent.

A third measure is the proportion of population with post-secondary education. Arguably, individuals today more than in previous economic periods need skills and education in order to thrive. It has been noted that populism is attractive to those with lower levels of education, either because of their more precarious employment situation, or because of weaker levels of internal efficacy (Thompson, 2016). Consequently, ridings populated by individuals with post-secondary credentials may contrast with places where the population holds fewer qualifications. The proportion of the population with post-secondary education in a riding ranges from a low of about 30 percent to a high of about 80 percent.

Our analysis also takes into account regional factors. For instance, Ford seems very popular in his home community of Etobicoke, and the three ridings in this area are treated as a separate dummy variable. There are other regions with some political significance, such as the rest of the 416 area of Toronto and the "905" Greater Toronto area. These, too, are treated as separate dummy variables.

Results

The method of analysis used here is seemingly unrelated regression which models three separate dependent variables against the same specification of independent variables. This generates three vote-estimation models, one for each candidate. Results are displayed in Table 2. Coefficients are based on the logged percentage of ballots obtained by each candidate.

Table 2: Vote estimates using seemingly unrelated regression

	1: Doug Ford			2: Christine Elliott			3: Caroline Mulroney		
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Sig.
Particip. rate	-.015	.007	.027	.009	.008	.249	.018	.012	.120
Unemp. rate	-.054	.021	.011	.026	.025	.311	.029	.037	.429
Education	-.018	.004	.000	.013	.004	.003	.030	.006	.000
Visible minorities	.007	.001	.000	-.007	.001	.000	-.006	.002	.004
Regions									
Etobicoke	.269	.141	.056	-.353	.168	.035	-.597	.244	.015
Rest of Toronto	-.133	.082	.103	-.015	.097	.876	-.124	.142	.384
GTA "905"	-.039	.067	.560	.154	.080	.056	-.373	.117	.001
Intercept	5.766	.526	.000	2.321	.627	.000	.297	.914	.745
N	120			120			120		
R-sq	.417			.278			.331		
RMSE	.232			.276			.403		

First, it is clear that workforce dynamics were important for Ford's support. Ridings with higher levels of workforce participation showed lower levels of support for Ford. In contrast, workforce participation rates appeared unrelated to the support of the other two candidates. Unemployment was also important for Ford's support. Here, however, the trend went in the opposite direction: When unemployment was high, support for Ford decreased. This may seem counter-intuitive to the economic-malaise narrative, but it could indicate that such a measure does not necessarily capture discouraged workers, and thus, appeals more to the rhetoric of Elliott and Mulroney, the two arguably more mainstream candidates. Indeed, when the votes of Elliott and Mulroney are combined (analysis not shown here), unemployment emerges as a significant factor, whereby their combined appeal was more likely to have drawn support in areas with higher levels of unemployment.

As noted previously, participation rates reflect more fundamental economic conditions. The models show that Ford's support increased as labour force participation declined. This is consistent with the economic argument of populism, whereby Ford drew support from those who are economically discouraged.

Ford's appeal was greater in areas with lower levels of educational attainment. There are a couple of plausible reasons. The contemporary economy requires increasingly educated workers, rendering the less educated more vulnerable (see, for example, Heisz, Jackson and Picot, 2002; Teixeira and Rogers, 2000). Secondly, those who are less educated often exhibit lower levels of political efficacy, and this can raise the appeal of non-mainstream candidates (Perrella, 2009) and, potentially, of populism as well. This appeal to the less educated is potentially one driving force behind populists' anti-elite narrative.

Ford's appeal was also quite high in areas with greater concentrations of visible minorities. One can safely discount Ford's narrative as having appealed to racism, but it is not obvious why visible minorities are drawn to his message. It could be a consequence of social conservatism, but there is no census measure for that. It could also reflect the previous support Rob Ford enjoyed among immigrants and visible minorities, and this was partly due to a populism based on the principle of work ethic (Doolittle, 2014).
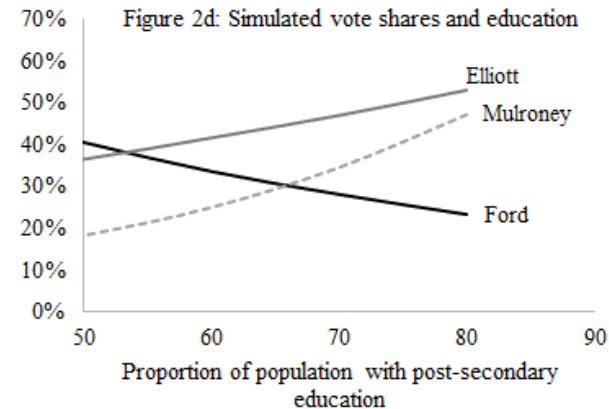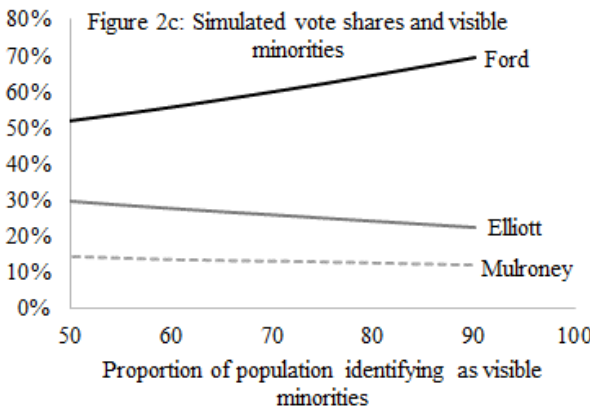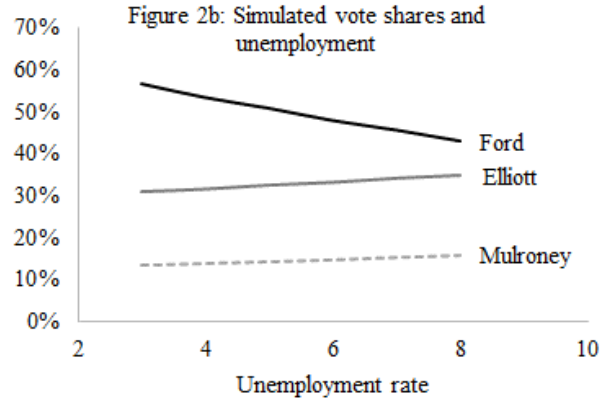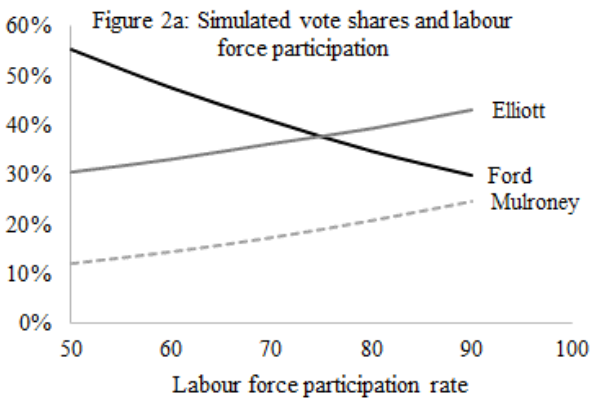
As for region, it is clear that residents of Etobicoke were not supportive of Mulroney. More than 60 percent of second-ballot votes in Etobicoke went to Ford. However, it is curious that Ford's appeal in Etobicoke was only superficially apparent. Model 1 shows that when other factors are taken into account, the Etobicoke regional dummy is only marginally significant for Ford. Therefore, Ford's home-base advantage may not be as sound. Why that is remains to be fully explained by the confounding variables. Etobicoke has a slightly lower workforce participation rate compared to the rest of Toronto and to the GTA, and this may have contributed to Ford's appeal, independent of his local ties. But that is a tentative conclusion.

The models of Table 2 are graphically represented in Figures 2a to 2d. Each shows the three candidates' simulated vote estimates distributed over four key variables. Illustrations are based on the range of actual values of each variable, holding all other variables to their mean value. Overall, one consistent feature is the contrast Ford draws with the other two candidates. His trend lines always move in opposite directions. This suggests that Elliott and Mulroney fought over similar electoral space, and in effect competed against each other, while Ford was able to distinguish his campaign more clearly from the other two.

Another clear pattern is the one that forms around labour force participation. Estimates for Ford's vote are higher than 50 percent in areas with low levels of workforce participation, but drop 20 points in those ridings with more robust economic conditions. Unemployment, in contrast, is not nearly as consequential. Areas with low unemployment (around three percent) show support for Ford at around 55 percent. This drops to 40 percent for ridings with the highest unemployment rate (around eight percent).

Ridings with high concentrations of visible minorities overwhelmingly supported Ford. Estimates of his support range from 38 percent in places with a very low population of visible minorities (5 percent) to 50 percent when visible minorities account for half a riding's population and continue to increase from this point on. Even when focusing only on the "rest of Toronto" (i.e., the "416" area outside of Etobicoke), the estimate of Ford's support ranges from 39 percent to 64 percent.

Education, as noted in Table 2, was inversely related to Ford's support. Estimated support for Ford drops nearly 35 percentage points when moving from a scenario where 30 percent of the population holds post-secondary credentials to a scenario where 80 percent do.

Figure 2a: Simulated vote shares and labour force participation

Figure 2b: Simulated vote shares and unemployment

Figure 2c: Simulated vote shares and visible minorities

Figure 2d: Simulated vote shares and education

General election campaign

The official campaign start date was May 9, when the writs were dropped, but that did not stop any of the parties from striking some positions well before. And in the case of Ford, as soon as he was installed as leader, he immediately began to draw criticism for some positions. Perhaps as an acknowledgment of Granic Allen's role as his kingmaker, he promised to scrap the "sex-ed" curriculum. He also promised to undo the cap-and-trade carbon reduction strategy put in place by the Wynne government and to cut hydro rates by 12 percent. He also took some unusual positions, such as promising that Ontario would once again have available beer for one dollar a bottle, "buck a beer." Apart from such statements, Ford did not release a concrete written platform. It has become standard for parties to release fully costed platforms, but Ford broke that tradition, with obvious little cost.

The incumbent Liberals, for their part, sought the approval of the electorate through their progressive budget, released March 28. It was filled with spending allocations for seniors, childcare, health care, among others (Ontario 2018). If the budget and its warmly branded title, *A Plan for Care and Opportunity*, was an attempt to draw voters, it clearly failed. If anything, public opinion polls showed no abatement to the anti-Liberal momentum.

The Liberals' drop from grace might be attributable to various scandals, some of which led to court cases and convictions. One notable longstanding scandal involved the 2011 cancellation of gas-fired power plants in Oakville and Mississauga. Residents living in the affected areas were not supportive of the plants, and some saw the cancellation of these

plants as a means for the governing Liberals, then lead by Dalton McGuinty, to hold on to some legislative seats. Nonetheless, the cancellation was seen as a political move, and cost about $1.1 billion (Morrow, 2015a). The issue was a key reason McGuinty resigned as leader and, effectively, retired from politics. Furthermore, the scandal was aggravated by allegations that key players deleted emails and electronic files in order to cover some tracks. The law requires government emails and records to be preserved. Their destruction was a violation that led one player, David Livingston, who had served as McGuinty's chief of staff, to being sentenced to a four-month jail term in April 2018 (Ferguson 2018a).

The Liberals' new leader in 2013 and the province's subsequent premier, Kathleen Wynne, also found herself embroiled in scandals. For instance, the Ontario government paid millions of dollars to teachers' unions, ostensibly to compensate for the cost of the extended rounds of negotiations, but it was seen as a way for the government to pay off unions in order to avoid a strike (Morrow, 2015b). Also, and this does not qualify as a scandal per se, there was the rising cost of electricity. In 2017, Wynne tried to address this concern by giving Ontario ratepayers a 25 percent reduction on their hydro bills, as well as to cap the next four annual increases to two percent (Ferguson and Benzie, 2017; Ferguson, 2017), although all this imposed significant costs to the province's debt load. Consequently, the opposition focused on these controversies to paint the Liberals as a party that cannot be trusted and that mismanages public funds.

Lastly, it is worth examining the platform promises the Ontario NDP made to voters, particularly given the party's strong surprise showing, briefly leading the polls, and ultimately finishing in second. The party's positioning in the 2018 election can best be understood in the context of its 2014 pitch, so a brief history is in order. In 2014, the NDP made a clear and controversial populist pitch to working-class voters who may have been considering supporting the PCs under Tim Hudak. For example, in the lead-up to the election call, the NDP disappointed anti-poverty and labour activists who had been pushing a minimum wage increase to $15 per hour. The NDP advocated an increase to only $12 while simultaneously cutting taxes for small businesses (see Black 2014). Then, the party included a bizarre promise to establish a Ministry of Savings and Accountability in its platform.

In hindsight, the most generous interpretation of the party's strategy in 2014 would be to acknowledge the way that Toronto Mayor Rob Ford and his brother, then-councillor Doug Ford, demonstrated the appeal of populist pitches to voters. Perhaps the party leadership sensed that this kind of appeal would siphon some voters from the Progressive Conservatives at a time when the Liberal Party was potentially in serious danger. Political parties engage in this kind of platform stretching all the time to win the support of voters beyond their core. However, the art to making it successful is to do it in such a way as to maintain the commitment of core voters. In this case, the Ontario NDP failed disastrously. Long-time party members were aghast at the shameless anti-government pandering in the platform and the failure to express the policy demands of the coalition pushing for a $15 per hour minimum wage. The most visible manifestation of this backlash came on May 23, 2014, one day after the platform release, when 34 party elders (including feminist journalist and activist Michelle Landsberg, whose husband, Steven Lewis, was the former leader of the Ontario NDP) published an open letter to Horwath decrying the party's shift to the right (Russell 2014).

In the 2018 election, the NDP seemed determined to avoid this kind of internal conflict, so its platform emphasized much more traditional leftist issues. The party emphasized a

provincial dental and pharmacare plan, reduced hydroelectricity rates, reforms to post-secondary education assistance, and increased taxes on the rich and corporations (Ontario NDP, 2018). The impact of the 2014 orientation on the NDP's 2018 campaign can be seen in the campaign's final week. The NDP had just taken over a lead in the polls when Horwath committed publicly to never using back-to-work legislation to end public sector strikes in an interview with the *Toronto Star*'s editorial board (Ferguson 2018b). Almost immediately, the NDP's lead in the polls plateaued, and perhaps more importantly, the Progressive Conservatives began a slow but steady rise leading to their win on June 7.

It will be impossible to prove that Horwath's comments about back-to-work legislation caused swing voters to turn away from the party to the PCs, but it is certainly possible. As will be discussed later, there are other plausible hypotheses of what happened in that final week. In any case, the NDP's pro-union stand on back-to-work legislation may have been on the mind of many voters. Since the Harris government of the 1990s, Ontario voters have been nervous about a return to stormy public sector labour relations leading to hospital and school closures. It seems odd that voters may have rewarded tough-on-unions PCs, but perhaps they simply wagered that an NDP government may have guaranteed strikes in the public sector as unions might have exploited their close relationship with the party and a public promise to never use back-to-work legislation.

It is additional speculation, but this pattern perhaps reveals a strategic clumsiness on the part of the Ontario NDP. It is can be difficult for a third-place party to reach into the crowded space between a first and second place party and appeal to new voters. In that situation, it seems more rational to launch appeals directed at the party's base of support, in part because the party's core supporters legitimately may see no possibility of reward. By contrast, it seems very rational for the leading party, however flimsy its lead might be, to appeal to swing voters in the dying days of a campaign. Here, even the party's core supporters might bite their tongue because they may collectively see the possibility of a reward in terms of winning government and hence refrain from criticizing the leadership in public. However, between the 2014 and 2018 election campaigns, the NDP managed to get this exactly backward, launching a campaign directed at PC-NDP swing voters in 2014 that alienated the party's core supporters, and then reinforcing the party's appeal to core voters in the last week of the 2018 campaign when it was in the lead.

Media analysis

We next explore more in depth the salience of issues among the electorate. We are particularly interested in noting instances where news content of certain issues is more likely to be associated with specific party leaders. The objective is to determine whether an issue is more likely to be associated with a particular leader or whether it was covered more broadly. This is important to consider as it may explain how voters distinguish the various parties and leaders.

Data from the 2018 Ipsos election-day survey (Ipsos, 2018) show that voters were moved by more than just a couple of issues. For certain, energy and ethics ranked high. Energy costs were noted as a top issue by 23 percent of respondents. Government integrity was a distant second, noted by 11 percent of respondents. Other issues that have marked much political discourse over the last few years, such as climate change, legalization of marijuana, the controversial changes to the Ontario health education curriculum (and its

new changes to the sex-ed components), immigration, healthcare, the minimum wage, and Indigenous issues, did not surface as salient.

Table 3: Summary of news articles sampled

Newspapers	Articles retrieved
Globe and Mail	241
Hamilton Spectator	48
Kingston Whig-Standard	103
London Free Press	134
National Post	164
Ottawa Citizen	131
Ottawa Sun	129
Sault Star	68
Sudbury Star	110
Toronto Star	235
Toronto Sun	191
Waterloo Region Record	83
Windsor Star	86
Total	1723

Figure 3 shows five-day moving averages of the number of times search terms appeared in newspapers. The campaign began with education and taxes as key issues. During the May 9-13 period, "education" appeared on average about 80 times per day, with the term "taxes" appearing 61 times. "Jobs" was close behind with a daily average of 57 appearances over that same period. The early interest in these topics is not surprising as the health curriculum (i.e., "sex-ed") and carbon pricing (i.e., "carbon tax") were hotly debated during the PC leadership, with the issues' salience carrying over to the start of the general campaign.

A media content analysis was conducted on 1,723 articles from 13 newspapers, collected over the May 9 to June 7 campaign period (see Table 3).[7] Nine issues and topics were tracked, namely: health, taxes, electricity, ethics, jobs, debt, waste, education, and environment. These issues were selected for their general relevance both in terms of what has normally been top-of-mind in public opinion, but also what was uniquely pertinent based on topics discussed by the party leaders in 2018.

Figure 3: Number of articles by issue, May to June, 2018
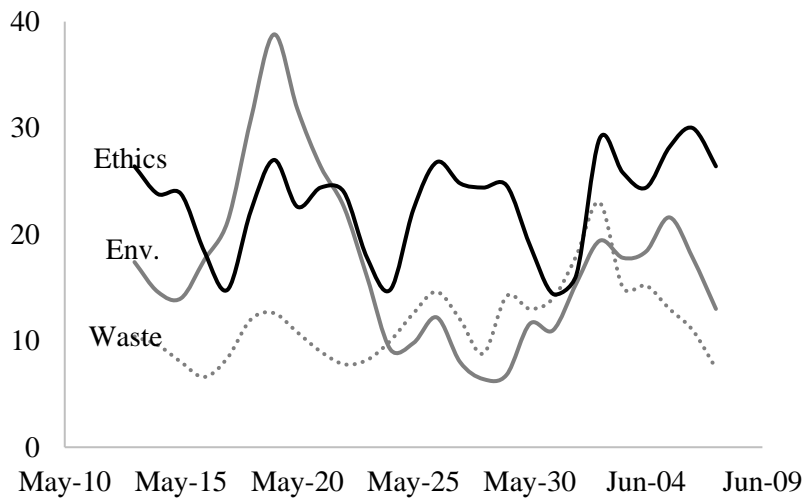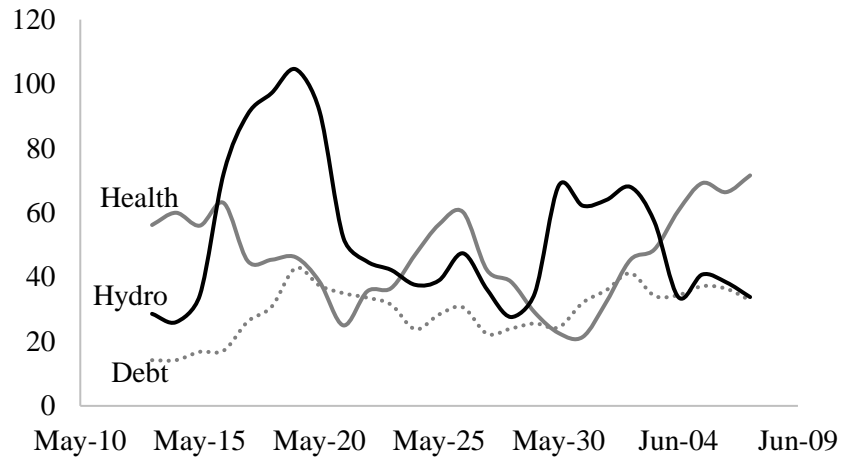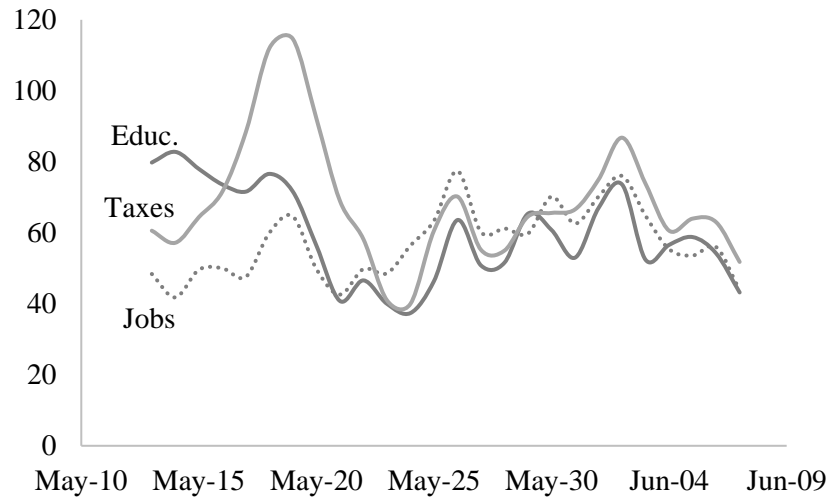
Over the course of the campaign, however, all issues competed with each other, with some issues emerging as more prominent at different times. Coverage of "hydro" ranked as the top issue in the third week of May, dropping off in salience towards the end of the month, re-emerging in early June, and dropping off again as the campaign wound down. Actually, most issues showed a decline in salience at the end of the campaign, with healthcare being the one exception. Media attention to healthcare grew steadily over the final weeks of the campaign to end as the most salient issue.

Figure 4: Regression coefficients for leader-issue mentions
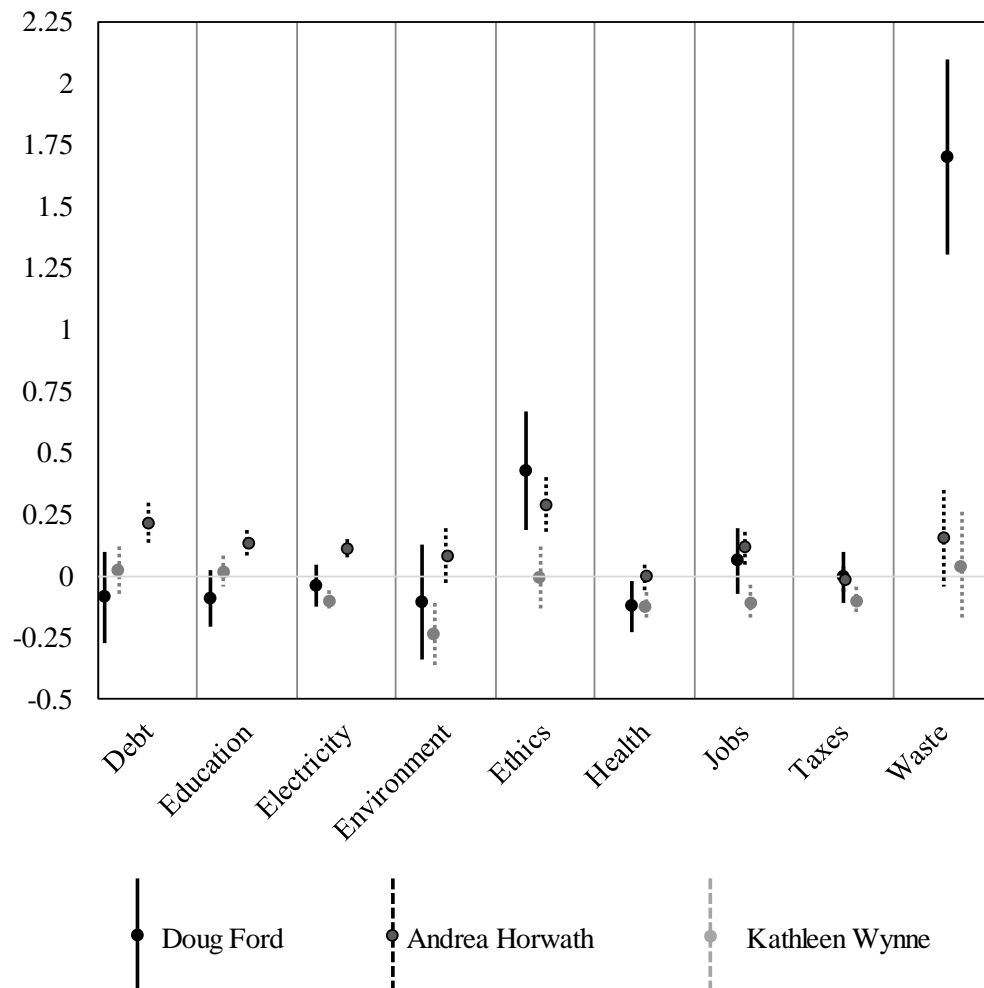
The next stage of analysis determined the extent to which coverage of any issue is associated with a particular party leader. A series of simple OLS regression models were generated setting leader mentions as the independent variable with issue mentions as the dependent variable. Results, displayed in Figure 4, show the estimate of regression coefficients along with their 95% confidence intervals.

The standout result is obviously Ford, who was highly correlated with mentions of "waste," and, to a slightly lesser extent, "ethics." More specifically, for every mention of Ford, there was on average 1.5 mentions of words that were included in the dictionary capturing "waste," and for every two mentions of Ford, there was a full extra mention of ethics.

Somewhat more surprising was that the Liberals and the NDP were both highly correlated with mentions of debts and deficits. This is unusual for the center-left as public finances are normally more salient among conservative parties. However, it makes sense when considering the fact that Ford refused to cost the PC platform, so any detailed coverage of public finances will likely only include leaders whose parties actually released a costed platform.

Figure 5: Regression coefficients for leader sentiment
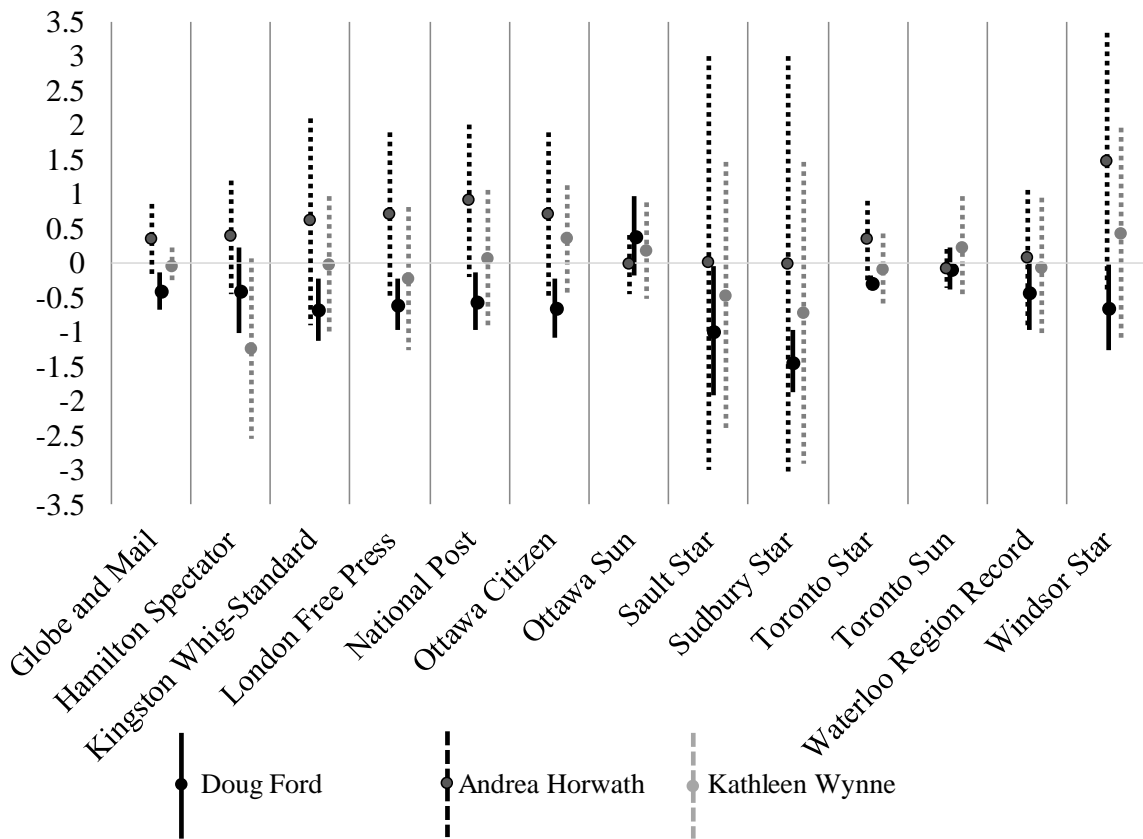
A final analysis looks at leader mentions with net sentiment scores. These were calculated using the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary (Young and Soroka, 2012). The net sentiment score is the difference between positive and negative words, divided by the length of the news story. We fitted a linear model for each newspaper, with sentiment as the

dependent variable and leader mentions as the independent variable. Similar to Figure 4, results in Figure 5 plot coefficient estimates with their corresponding 95 percent confidence intervals. There are a few standouts. Overall, coverage of Ford was generally negative, with the Ottawa Sun being the only exception. Horwath was positively correlated with sentiment in almost all newspapers, but a low sample size explains the wide confidence intervals.

Public opinion

As noted earlier, the PCs started 2018 in solid position to secure that year's election, so long as they avoided any self-inflicted wounds. And in keeping with the pattern of the last few election campaigns, the PCs were set to squander their commanding lead. But this time was different in that the Patrick Brown scandal and the hastily organized leadership race over the winter did little to erode support for the PCs. One can say that despite the PCs' apparent habit of tripping over their polling leads, there appears to be few events leading up to the June election that moved voters one way or another. Public opinion trends from autumn 2017 to winter 2018 can be described as stable (see Figure 6). The PCs' lead was virtually unaffected by the scandal, and might even have strengthened somewhat amid the party's leadership turmoil. One possible point of inflection is when Ford ascended to the leadership on March 10. Here, the PCs' popularity shows some weakening.

Figure 6: Trends in party support, August 2017 to June 2018
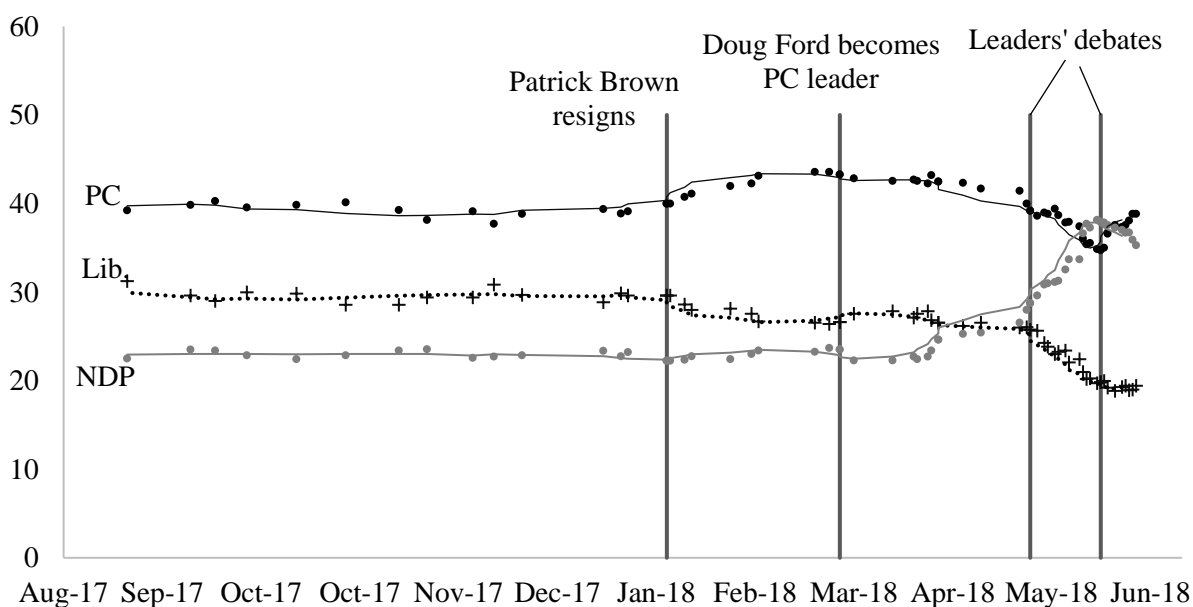
The campaign was also marked by televised debates involving the three main party leaders on May 7 and 27. In addition to these televised debates, there were two other debates. The "Black Community Provincial Leaders Debate," hosted by the Jamaican Canadian Association, took place on April 11. Ford chose not to participate, but it also included Ontario Green Party leader Mike Schreiner. The other debate was on May 11 in Parry Sound. It was hosted by the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and focused mainly on issues more central to Northern Ontario. These debates did little to help Ford's popularity. Actually, they may have hurt him a little, along with other characteristics of his campaign. Ford's lackluster performance during the debates, his affinity for Donald Trump,

and an apparent weak grasp of the job of premier gave some the impression that he was threatening to undermine the PCs' polling lead. That did not fully materialize as the anti-Liberal momentum was too strong. Also, the PCs' pre-campaign lead afforded Ford with plenty of room to fall before reaching a point that would have jeopardized the party's chances.

There were times, however, when the PCs' lead was weakened to a point that it risked a loss, but not to the Liberals. While the PCs' commanding lead saw a bit of a drop, the NDP saw its popularity rise. The party began the campaign in third place, which is not atypical. However, the NDP's fortunes showed an upward trajectory the moment Ford won the PC leadership, perhaps even before this event. The April 11 debate certainly seemed to coincide with an accelerating upward trend, possibly due to Ford not being present at this event, leaving the NDP able to portray itself as a more viable alternative to the Liberals. This may have worked. The NDP's improving fortunes after this event continued right up to the final days of the campaign, and the party's gains came almost entirely from the collapsing Liberals. Data from Ipsos's election-day poll indicate that nearly 40 percent of respondents who had voted Liberal in 2014 switched to the NDP in 2019.

Whether this rising NDP support was part of some Ontario "orange wave" is too early to determine. It may mainly reflect the various scandals suffered by the Ontario Liberals, and voter fatigue. This is not to discount the possibility that a block of voters is solidifying around the NDP, but at this stage, the evidence seems to weigh more heavily on short-term factors. Polls taken soon after the June election show Ontario voters reverting back to a more familiar pattern, where the NDP ranks third.

It is also likely that the NDP was seen as a threat to both the PCs and the Liberals. Towards the end of the campaign, the NDP was the target of attack ads by the other two parties, and this may explain (at least in part) the noticeable dent in the NDP's pattern in the final days of the campaign. The Liberal ads sought to paint the NDP as inflexibly ideological and to stoke fear of unions and organized labour as "shadowy, dangerous, self-interested and subversive forces," (Nerenberg, 2018). Perhaps this was in response to the Liberals' ineffectual ads that attacked the PCs, where the effect was, as desired, a shift of voter support away from the PCs. But instead of going to the Liberals, this support went to the NDP (Wells, 2018). The PCs, too, attacked the NDP by focusing on ideological points and by painting the party as opposed to cherished Canadian national symbols (e.g., the Remembrance Day poppy). With the NDP taking shots from both parties, it does not seem illogical that their poll numbers dropped.

Individual vote analysis

An analysis of individual vote choice is based on the Ipsos election-day poll, which surveyed more than 4,100 respondents. Several variables were extracted, namely: a measure of partisanship,[8] ideology, issue priorities, and a battery of socio-demographic items,[9] which includes an item that asks a respondent whether they were born in Canada or if they had emigrated from another country, and an item that asks respondents if they are a visible minority. These last two serve to test whether any of the vote outcomes, particularly for the PCs, can be explained by the ethno-cultural hypothesis of populism. For similar reasons, religiosity was included, as socially conservative positions were salient among many

Table 4: Multinomial logistic regression model for vote choice (Liberal party set as reference)

	PC			NDP			Other		
	Coef.	S.E.	Sig.	Coef.	S.E.	Sig.	Coef.	S.E.	Sig.
Partisanship									
PC	2.182	.224	.000	.154	.231	.504	-.270	.277	.329
Liberal	-1.226	.191	.000	-.653	.161	.000	-2.148	.233	.000
NDP	.394	.309	.202	2.218	.260	.000	.291	.337	.389
Ideology	2.333	.283	.000	-1.148	.244	.000	1.045	.373	.005
Religiosity	.235	.175	.181	-.239	.150	.111	-.281	.236	.235
Liberal antipathy	3.326	.264	.000	3.060	.252	.000	3.052	.330	.000
Issue priorities									
Economy/finances	.205	.145	.157	-.148	.120	.216	-.561	.187	.003
Energy	.413	.154	.007	.193	.138	.162	-.599	.223	.007
Governance/integrity	-.064	.155	.681	.055	.131	.674	.163	.195	.403
Social programs	-.365	.142	.010	-.002	.123	.984	-.332	.188	.077
Taxes	.861	.165	.000	-.269	.162	.097	-.167	.237	.479
Gender	-.100	.137	.465	.053	.117	.652	.203	.187	.278
Immigrant	.017	.174	.922	-.181	.151	.230	-.339	.250	.176
Visible minority	-.148	.224	.509	-.252	.199	.206	-.971	.374	.009
Religion									
Catholic	.115	.253	.649	.311	.215	.148	-.073	.358	.838
Main. Protestant	.096	.254	.707	.161	.214	.452	.086	.349	.805
Evang. Protestant	.602	.277	.029	.681	.244	.005	.054	.400	.893
No religion	.066	.261	.801	.485	.211	.021	.506	.335	.131
Age									
18 to 34	-.376	.319	.238	-.082	.257	.750	-.452	.375	.228
54 and up	-.120	.186	.518	-.366	.157	.020	-.436	.237	.065
Education									
Low	-.130	.462	.779	.030	.401	.941	.315	.605	.602
High	-.218	.205	.287	.093	.187	.618	.320	.295	.278
Income									
Low	.236	.173	.172	.460	.146	.002	.617	.231	.008
High	-.107	.158	.500	-.224	.135	.097	.197	.219	.368
Union member	.389	.171	.023	.609	.144	.000	.496	.217	.022
Region									
Toronto	-.208	.201	.300	-.050	.164	.760	-.988	.298	.001
GTA/"905"	.406	.205	.048	.217	.180	.228	-.168	.294	.568
SW Ontario	.379	.196	.054	.852	.169	.000	.929	.232	.000
Hamilton-Niagara	-.261	.222	.240	.011	.186	.953	-.721	.327	.027
Rural	.663	.203	.001	.309	.186	.098	.688	.246	.005
Intercept	-2.133	.474	.000	.173	.397	.663	-.928	.611	.129

N	3366	
-2 Log likelihood	5247.543	
Psuedo R-sq.	.651	Source: Ipsos Ontario 2018 Election Day Survey.

members of the PCs and were also apparent in opposition to the previous Liberal government's reform to the health education curriculum. In addition, we included a survey item that directly asked respondents whether their vote was motivated by a desire to "punish" the incumbent Liberals, as it is plausible that the populist argument in Ontario is overstated and the PC victory was based mainly on anger towards the Liberals.

A multinominal logistic model was generated, with results reported in Table 4. The incumbent Liberals were set as the base category. Some findings are not surprising and align with much of what we know and expect from voter models.

First, how respondents voted in the 2014 election is a strong determinant of their 2018 ballot. The partisanship dummies all show strong coefficients for their corresponding parties. Ideology, too, is closely linked to the vote.[10] The more one leans right, the more likely they would have voted for the PCs, and the less likely they voted NDP. Conservative ideology is also linked with support for "Other" "parties. Given that the Greens are the fourth largest party in the election, this result suggests that the Greens are not necessarily viewed as a left-wing party, but the Ipsos survey did not specifically identify Green voters, so it is unclear which "Other" party drew support from the right.

Religion was a factor, as well. It has been shown consistently in Canada that members of certain denominations are more likely to support one political party over another, and some of that is reflected here. In particular, Evangelical Protestants are more likely to have voted PC, which is consistent with some literature (see Kay, Perrella and Brown, 2009), but the Evangelical vote seems to have been even stronger for the NDP. Normally, it is the "mainstream" Protestants, defined as those who belong to United, Anglican and Presbyterian denominations, who are more likely to vote NDP, but results here show otherwise. A less surprising result concerns those who claim no religious affiliation. They typically vote NDP.

Religiosity does not surface as an important driver, which is a bit of a surprise in light of the conservative narrative surrounding the "sex-ed" curriculum.[11] It was expected that the salience of this issue would have activated religious voters to support the PC, while non-religious supporters (i.e., those who score low on the religiosity index) would have gravitated towards the other parties. No such result was found here. However, when the religion dummies are excluded, religiosity emerges as significant. In this case, higher levels of religiosity associate with higher levels of support for the PCs, and lower levels of support for the NDP and other parties. The reason may have to do with varying levels of religiosity among the different denominations. The most religious denominations are Catholic and evangelical Protestant, with a religiosity score of .72 and .80, respectively, while mainstream Protestants score .65, other religions .49, and no religion .12.

Among the five issue priorities listed, only a few seem relevant to explaining the vote. Taxes were an issue for PC voters, not for the other parties. Economy and finances helped explain why some voters opted for other parties over the Liberals. Those for whom social programs were a priority were less likely to vote PC over the Liberals. The topic of energy seems a bit ambivalent. On the one hand, the issue was more likely to drive voters to the PCs than the Liberals, but on the other, it was more likely to drive voters to the Liberals than "Other" parties. Curiously, while the topic of government ethics seemed paramount, no party benefited from this issue.

Among the socio-demographic items, it is apparent that the PCs did well among rural voters and among those who reside in Southwestern Ontario and Toronto's GTA (typically

the part of the 905 area code spanning Halton to Durham). However, Southwestern Ontario (approximately the 519 area code) was an even stronger factor for votes for the NDP and "Other" parties (likely mainly the Greens). These results are borne out by the actual number of seats won by the parties (bearing in mind redistribution in 2015 and a larger legislature).

Table 5: Regional seat distribution by region, 2014-2018

	2018				2014		
	PC	Lib.	NDP	Green	PC	Lib.	NDP
Toronto	11	3	11			21	2
Greater Toronto Area	22		4		1	16	2
Hamilton-Niagara	6		7		1	5	5
Southwest Ontario	15		8	1	13	4	6
Eastern Ontario	19	3	2		11	10	
Northern Ontario	3	1	8		1	3	6
Total	76	7	40	1	28	59	21

In the GTA, the PCs won 22 seats, a gain of 21 seats from 2014, while the NDP saw a gain of only two seats (see Table 5). The PCs and NDP improved their seat count slightly in Southwestern Ontario, and more than slightly in Eastern Ontario (from Simcoe eastward to the Quebec border). However, the PCs and NDP each won 11 seats in Toronto, normally a Liberal stronghold. Of the seven seats the Liberals retained, one in Thunder Bay and three each in suburban areas of Toronto and Ottawa, only two were won by margins exceeding 4 percentage points. Kathleen Wynne was only re-elected in Don Valley West by a margin of 0.4 percent, in contrast to her previous large margins of victory. In none of the 24 seats in Southwestern Ontario did the Liberals finish better than third.

Age, education, and income were not as impactful. While older voters were less likely to vote NDP over the Liberals, little more can be noted about age. Even less can be said about education. Voters with high versus low education did not distinguish themselves at the ballot. This contrasts with the results in Table 2 which showed education as a factor in the PC leadership race. Here, education seems not to have mattered. Income mattered more. Low-income earners, defined here as those whose household income was less than $50,000 (the bottom third of the Ipsos sample), were more likely to vote NDP and other parties.

Union membership made one more likely to vote for *any* party *other than* the Liberals. There is clearly an anti-Liberal sentiment prevalent among organized labour. Part of this may reflect the government's approach to negotiating with some public sector unions, which in turn endorsed the NDP (Loriggio, 2018).

Arguably, the strongest factor in the 2018 Ontario election was antipathy towards the Liberals. Respondents were asked if their vote was mainly motivated by "punishing the Liberals," and indeed, this variable emerges as the most important. Antipathy towards the Liberals yields the highest coefficient, for all three parties, but especially for the PCs. This suggests that the populist wave that has swept through much of the industrialized world may

not necessarily have been the force that brought the PCs to power. While there is some evidence that elements of populism were apparent in Ford's rise to the PC leadership, his populist veneer may have worn thin among the general electorate. Furthermore, one year after winning the general election, public opinion polls suggested the PCs – and particularly Ford, himself – were less popular than the Liberals under Wynne in their dying days. The NDP's surge in the election also seems to have reversed, with the electorate moving increasingly towards supporting the Liberals.

Public opinion and seat projections

One important factor to consider in how voter intentions translate into actual potential seats for the parties is the concept of vote efficiency. Some parties are more "efficient," in that they can gain seats with smaller margins of voter support, while others require greater surges of voter support to translate into actual winning of seats. Often, this is due to the geographical concentration of partisans; some are more widely dispersed, some are more clustered in particular regions. Seat projection models try to capture such a phenomenon, and many have indicated that despite the NDP's surge in popularity, it is constrained by an inefficient vote distribution, while the PCs benefited from greater efficiency.

Seat projections by the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy (LISPOP) illustrate the pattern. The seat projections result from an aggregation of polls, which are then analyzed for more particular region-specific seat count. In the various projections released by LISPOP from March to June, 2018, the PC's lead overall was always more vote-efficient than the other two main competitors.

Table 6: Seat projections

|	PC		NDP		Lib.	
	Poll	Seats	Poll	Seats	Poll	Seats
Mar-20	43%	82	25%	22	27%	20
Apr-17	41%	80	25%	22	27%	22
May-13	40%	72	30%	30	25%	22
May-22	38%	69	33%	39	23%	16
May-24	37%	64	38%	48	21%	12
May-30	35%	63	38%	54	20%	7
Jun-04	37%	67	37%	51	19%	5
Jun-06	38%	69	37%	50	19%	4
Election Result	41%	76	34%	40	20%	7

Source: Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy

As shown in Table 6, the NDP's rising popularity does, indeed, result in strong growth in projected seat count, but it is not as efficient. At times the NDP led the polls by as much as 3 percentage points, but at no time were they ever projected with a plurality of seats. To

illustrate, consider that when the PCs showed an overall level of support of 38 percent among the electorate, the party was projected to secure 69 seats and thus a clear seat majority. In contrast, a similar level of support for the NDP yielded a projection of 48 to 54 seats. The PC party's support was more present in swing ridings, including those of the crucial GTA (see Table 5), helping the party gain more seats with lower levels of popularity.

Figure 7 transforms the data in Table 6 by dividing for each party a particular date's projected seat count in total numbers (out of 124) by its overall provincial popularity. The higher the number, the more vote efficient the party. The PCs clearly stand out as showing far superior efficiency, with the NDP and Liberals almost always tied for second place, except towards the end of the campaign. By the middle of May, the NDP became a bit more vote efficient, as more and more Liberals began to defect away. But still, the NDP was no match for the PCs' vote efficiency. The final data points in Figure 7 are based on the actual June 7 result, and here we see the PCs' vote efficiency slightly stronger than what was projected, while the NDP's actual efficiency was slightly weaker.

Figure 7: Vote efficiency
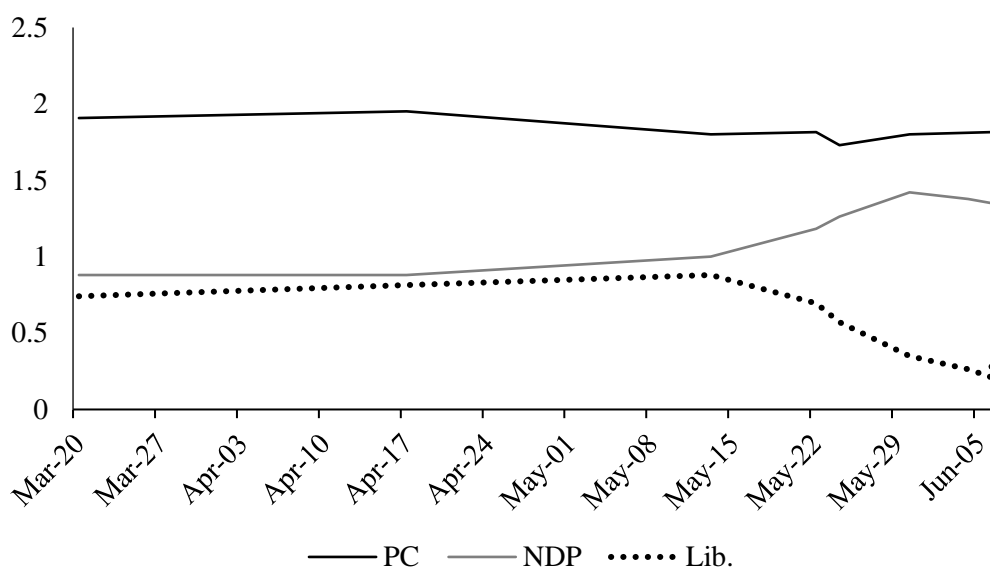
Conclusion

Most election campaigns customarily produce one winner and an assortment of various losers, but it can be plausibly argued that this one had three winners, each judged by a separate standard, and one definite loser. The PCs obviously won the election with a comfortable majority. The New Democrats, by virtually doubling their legislative representation, vaulted into the official Opposition to become the apparent alternative to the government. For the Green Party, success was achieved by winning its first ever provincial seat in the constituency of Guelph, thereby conferring a new-found degree of legitimacy. The Liberals, on the other hand, were badly beaten.

Both the PCs and the NDP (and perhaps the Greens, too) benefited from a "time for a change" sentiment, which was perfectly understandable as the Liberals had been in office since 2003 and had weathered a number of scandals during the period. But a desire for

change did not necessarily mean voters were fully embracing any viable alternative. Recall that the PCs walked into 2018 with a commanding lead that was beginning to chip away once Ford became leader. The easiest explanation is that Ford ran a poor campaign, where he was wooden in style and vague on policy, beyond simplistic slogans. He never explained what program changes would offset the tax cuts he promised. NDP leader Andrea Horwath had substantially higher popularity ratings throughout the campaign. What seems to have ultimately altered the dynamic was a series of last-minute televised attack ads from both the PCs and the Liberals targeting the New Democrats as radical and threatening. Kathleen Wynne's de facto concession five days before the election included a wish that voters would elect a minority government, with the Liberals at least holding the balance of power. Alas, the June 7 result left the legislature without a minority government, and Liberals without even reaching official party status, far from holding any balance of power.

But whether the June 7 result was another win for populists is less obvious. While data presented here suggest there may have been some populist sentiment behind Ford's leadership campaign, this seems less so for the general electorate, whose mood was driven more by antipathy towards Wynne and the Liberals. The appetite for change was far higher than an appetite for a certain *type* of change. This is further corroborated by public reaction to the government. Shortly after assuming power, the public began to sour on Ford's government. Controversial policy decisions sparked public outrage, leading the government to backtrack and reverse some decisions. Ford's popularity fell to ranking among the least popular premiers in Canada, suggesting either that the populist experiment in Ontario was a failure in implementation, or that populism as a movement did not necessarily grip Ontario as it has done elsewhere.

Endnotes

[1] The other four times the NDP (or its predecessor, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, CCF) came in second in seats were in 1943, 1948, 1975 and 1987, and in most cases (all but the 1987 election), the government was formed by the Progressive Conservatives.

[2] We thank Ipsos for its donation of election data to the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy.

[3] Patrick Brown also sought to win back the leadership by announcing that he, too, would run for leadership, but withdrew this effort on February 26; interim leader Vic Fedeli also considered running for the job, but he withdrew his candidacy for leader on January 30.

[4] As per section 26.6 of the party's constitution, if a constituency receives fewer than 100 votes, each ballot is worth one electoral point. This occurred in 2018 in three North Ontario constituencies: Timmins (78 ballots), Kiiwetinoong (34 ballots), and Mushkegowuk - James Bay (55 ballots). In turn, these three ridings contributed a total of 167 electoral points in the first ballot, slightly less in the third, and final, round as not all electors ranked all candidates. In this instance, ballots with no subsequent choice were eliminated, entirely.

[5] Data obtained from https://www.ontariopc.ca/ riding_by_riding_results

[6] Some ridings in Northern Ontario are excluded.

[7] The search string used was: ("Liberals" OR "NDP" OR "New Democrats" OR "Progressive Conservatives" OR "Progressive Conservative" OR "PCs" OR "Tories" OR "Greens" OR "Green Party")

OR ("Kathleen Wynne" OR "Andrea Horwath" OR "Doug Ford" OR "Mike Schreiner") AND (election OR campaign OR vote)

[8] Partisanship is measured using an item that asked respondents to report how they voted in the 2014 Ontario election. Three partisan measures were created, one for each main party (PC, Liberal and NDP). A score of 1 is assigned to respondents who indicated they had voted for the same party in both the 2014 and 2018 elections.

[9] Gender, country of origin, religion, urban/rural residency, region of residency, age, education, income, and union membership.

[10] Ideology is measured here by asking respondents to state their level of agreement to the following two statements: 1) "I think it's important that the government maintain a balanced budget even if it means cutting current programs and services," and 2) "I would rather the government cut spending on services than run a larger budget deficit." This index yields a Cronbach's alpha of .811.

[11] Religiosity is measured by asking respondents if they agreed with the following two statements: 1) "Do you believe in a God that answers prayer?" and 2) "Do you believe that the holy book of your religion (Bible, Quran, or other holy book) is the revealed word of God?" This index yields a Cronbach's alpha of .815.

References

Associated Press. 2017. "UN Chief Says Populism Has Triggered a Rise in Intolerance." 27 January.

Black, Simon. 2014. "Ontario NDP losing its voice on minimum wage." Toronto Star. 4 March.

Blackwell, Tom, Chris Selley and Emily Jackson. 2018. "Ford Declared as Winner of Chaotic Ontario PC Leadership Race, as Christine Elliott Concedes." *National Post*. 11 March.

Cohn, Martin R. 2018. "Ontario PCs Face their Trumpian Moment - which Way Will they Tilt?" *Waterloo Region Record*. 9 March.

Crawley, Mike. 2018. "With Doug Ford Joining PC Leadership Race, All Bets are Off." *CBC News*. 30 January. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/doug-ford-pc-ontario-election-leadership-race-1.4508807

Dassonneville, Ruth, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, 2013. "Economic Policy Voting and Incumbency: Unemployment in Western Europe." *Political Science Research and Methods* 1(1): 53-66.

Dinas, E. and Van Spanje, J. 2011. "Crime Story: The Role of Crime and Immigration in the Anti-Immigration Vote." *Electoral Studies* 30(4): 658-671.

Doolittle, Robyn. 2014. *Crazy Town: The Rob Ford Story*. Toronto: Penguin Books.

Ferguson, Rob. 2016. "Teen Tory Oosterhoff Touts His Social Conservative Credentials at All-Candidates Debate. *Toronto Star*. 7 November.

Ferguson, Rob. 2017. "Full Impact of Ontario's Controversial 25-Per-Cent Hydro Rate Cut to Kick in on Canada Day." *Toronto Star*. 22 June.

Ferguson, Rob, and Robert Benzie. 2017. "Hydro Rate Increases Will be Held to Rate of Inflation after 25-Per-Cent Cut." *Toronto Star*. 2 March.\

Ferguson, Rob. 2018a. "Former Chief of Staff to Premier Dalton McGuinty Gets Four Months in Jail for Wiping Hard Drives in Wake of Gas Plants Scandal." *Toronto Star*. 11 April.

Ferguson, Rob. 2018b. An NDP Government Would Not Use Back-to-Work Legislation to End Strikes, Party Leader Andrea Horwath Says." *Toronto Star*. 22 May.

Ferguson, Rob, and Robert Benzie. 2017. "Hydro Rate Increases Will be Held to Rate of Inflation after 25-Per-Cent Cut." *Toronto Star*. 2 March.

Fitzpatrick, Meagan. 2018. "Caroline Mulroney Has Name, Resumé and Backers, but Leadership Race Will be Decisive Test." *CBC News*, 2 February. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/mulroney-pc-leadership-1.4514315

Green, Jeff. 2018. "Hillier Sits Out Leadership Convention, is Cleared by Investigation. *Frontenac News*. 14 March.

Heisz, Andrew, Jackson, Andrew, & Picot, W.G. 2002. *Winners and Losers in the Labour Market of the 1990s*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 11F0019MIE2002184

Ignazi, Piero. 1992. "The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe." *European Journal of Political Research* 22(1): 3–34.

Inglehart, Ronald F. 2008. "Changing Values among Western Publics, 1970-2006: Postmaterialist Values and the Shift from Survival Values to Self-Expression Values." *West European Politics* 31(1-2): 130-146.

Ipsos. 2018. Ontario Election Day Survey. Available at: http://www.lispop.ca

Issawi, Hamdi. 2019. "As Convoy Claims Unity, Some Truckers Experience Fear and Loathing on the Yellow Vest Road." *Toronto Star*. 18 February.

Jacobs, Elisabeth. 2007. *The Politics of Economic Insecurity*. Brookings Institution.

Jones, Stephen RG, and W. Craig Riddell. 2019. "Unemployment, Marginal Attachment, and Labor Force Participation in Canada and the United States." *Journal of Labor Economics* 37(S2): S399-S441.

Kaufmann, Eric. 2017. "Why Values, Not Economics, Hold the Key to the Populist Right – and to Crafting New Migration Narratives." *Migration Policy Practice* 7(3): 42-46.

Kay, Barry J., Andrea M.L. Perrella, and Steven D. Brown. 2009. The religion enigma: Theoretical riddle or classificational artifact? Paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, ON.

Kerr, Jaren. 2018. "Half of Ontarians Would Vote for PCs in Next Election: Poll." *Toronto Star*. 19 February.

Kiss, Simon J., Andrea M.L. Perrella, and Barry J. Kay. 2014. "How to Win and Lose an Election: The Campaign Dynamics of the 2011 Ontario Election." *Canadian Political Science Review* 8(1): 126-40.

Kiss, Simon J., Andrea M.L. Perrella, and Zachary Spicer. 2019. "Culture, Ethnicity, or Economics? The Populism of Toronto Mayor Rob Ford." *Journal of Urban Affairs*.

Kotsis, Julie. 2018. "PC Leadership Hopeful Granic Allen Meets with Voters." *The Windsor Star*. 7 March.

Lipset, Seymour M. 1960. *Political Man*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company.

Loriggio, Paola. 2018. "As Ontario NDP Endorsed by Teachers' Union, Liberals Turn Attacks Toward Rival Party on the Left." *National Post*. 10 May.

Loriggio, Paola, and Shawn Jeffords. 2018. "No $15 Min Wage in 2019, Tory Leadership Hopefuls Say in First Debate." *The Canadian Press*. 16 Feb 2018.

Mainstreet Research. 2018a. "Ontario PC Leadership Race A Coin Flip Between Ford and Elliott." 28 February. https://www.mainstreetresearch.ca/ontario-pc-leadership-race-coin-flip-ford-elliott/

Mainstreet Research. 2018b. "Elliott Now Leads Ford, But It's Still Close." 9 March. https://www.mainstreetresearch.ca/elliott-now-leads-ford-still-close/

Morrow, Adrian. 2015a. "Ontario Liberals' Gas-Plants Scandal: Everything you Need to Know." *Globe and Mail*. 1 April.

Morrow, Adrian. 2015b. "Ontario Paid Total of $2.5-million to Teachers' Unions to Defuse Labour Disputes." *Globe and Mail*. 21 October.

Nerenberg, Karl. 2018. "Liberal ads attacking NDP could help Ford's PCs." *Rabble.ca* June 6. https://rabble.ca/news/2018/06/liberal-ads-attacking-ndp-could-help-ford%E2%80%99s-pcs

Ontario New Democratic Party. 2014. "A Plan That Makes Sense." Toronto. In possession of the authors.

Ontario New Democratic Party. 2018. "Change for the Better." Toronto. Available at: https://www.ontariondp.ca/platform Accessed: November 4, 2019

Perrella, Andrea M.L. 2005. "Long-Term Economic Hardship and Non-Mainstream Voting in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 38(2): 335-57.

Perrella, Andrea M.L. 2009. "Economic Decline and Voter Discontent." *Social Science Journal* 46(2): 347-68.

Perrella, Andrea M.L., Steven D. Brown, Barry J. Kay, and David C. Docherty. 2008. "The 2007 Provincial Election and Electoral System Referendum in Ontario." *Canadian Political Science Review* 2(1): 78-87.

Perrella, Andrea M.L., Simon J. Kiss, and Barry J. Kay. 2017. "Triple Play: The Ontario 2014 General Election." *Canadian Political Science Review* 11(1): 157-81.

Piketty, T. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Reevely, David. 2018. "As the PCs' Leadership Race Gets Ugly, Mulroney's Ideas are Worth a Look." *Ottawa Citizen*. 7 March.

Rushowy, Kristin, and Robert Benzie. 2018. "Ford Spars Over Immigration with Wynne and Horwath at Northern Debate." *Toronto Star*. 11 May.

Russell, Andrew. 2014. "NDP supporters say they are 'deeply distressed' by Horwath's campaign" Global News." 23 May. Available at: https://globalnews.ca/news/1351272/ndp-supporters-say-they-are-deeply-distressed-by-horwaths-campaign/. Accessed Nov. 4

Speer, Sean. 2017. "Canada's Participation Rate Could be the Populist 'Canary in the Coal Mine.'" *Globe and Mail*. 24 March.

Thompson, Derek. 2016. "Who are Donald Trump's Supporters, Really?" *Atlantic*. 1 March.

Teixeira, Ruy, and Joel Rogers. 2000. *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters.* New York: Basic Books.

Wells, Paul. 2018. "How Doug Ford Did It." *Maclean's*. https://www.macleans.ca/politics/how-doug-ford-did-it/. 8 June.

Werner, Kevin. 2018. "Ontario PC Leadership Contender Christine Elliott Wants to Reopen Sex-Ed Debate." *Hamilton Mountain News*. 14 February.

Wroe, Andrew. 2014. "Political Trust and Job Insecurity in 18 European Polities." *Journal of Trust Research* 4(2): 90-112.

Wroe, Andrew. 2016. "Economic Insecurity and Political Trust in the United States." *American Politics Research* 44(1): 131-163.

Young, Lori and Stuart Soroka. 2012. "Affective News: The Automated Coding of Sentiment in Political Texts." *Political Communication* 29(2): 205–31.

Zimonjic, Peter. 2017. "Tory Leadership Candidate Kellie Leitch Wants Immigrants to be Asked: 'Are Men and Women Equal?' *CBC News.* 7 March. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/leitch-immigrants-canadian-values-1.4012764