

How to Win and Lose an Election: The Campaign Dynamics of the 2011 Ontario Election

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Abstract: Ontario's general election on Oct. 6, 2011, produced a hung parliament and left much unresolved. The Progressive Conservative party under Tim Hudak entered the election year with promising prospects, and the PCs won 37 seats, 10 more than in 2007, yet failed to beat out the Liberals. The New Democratic Party under Andrea Horwath also enjoyed a much improved seat count of 17 elected members to Queen's Park. Combined, the incumbent Liberals were re-elected, but reduced to a minority of 53 seats, one seat shy of a majority, and the first minority government in Ontario politics since 1985. Premier Dalton McGuinty's attempt to secure a majority of seats in the form of 2012 by-elections failed, and shortly thereafter he resigned, leaving his Liberals and Ontario politics on stand-by for a possible non-confidence vote and, consequently, a new election. This review examines how the 2011 result unfolded. We place attention on campaign dynamics and issue salience.

Keywords: Ontario, election

Résumé: L'élection générale tenue en Ontario le 6 oct. 2011 a résulté en un parlement sans majorité et une situation indécise. Le Parti Progressiste Conservateur de Tim Hudak entreprit l'année électorale avec des perspectives prometteuses, et le PC gagna 37 sièges, 10 de plus qu'en 2007, échouant cependant à battre les Libéraux. Le Nouveau Parti Démocratique d'Andrea Horwath profita également d'une représentation accrue à 17 sièges à Queen's Park. Au total, les Libéraux sortants furent réélus, mais réduits à une minorité de 53 sièges, à un siège de la majorité, formant ainsi le premier gouvernement minoritaire en Ontario depuis 1985. Le premier ministre Dalton McGuinty échoua à atteindre la majorité par le biais d'élections partielles et démissionna peu après, laissant ses Libéraux et la politique ontarienne dans l'attente d'un possible vote de non-confiance et, conséquemment, d'une nouvelle élection. Cet article discute les résultats de l'élection de 2011, avec une attention particulière à la dynamique de la campagne et aux résultats marquants.

Mots-clés: Ontario, elections

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Introduction

In some ways, we still await the ultimate result of the 2011 Ontario general election. While the incumbent Liberals did win the election, they were reduced to 53 seats, one seat shy of a majority. A year later, a pair of by-elections could have changed the parliamentary dynamics with the resignation of two legislative seats. One riding, Vaughn, was held by former finance minister Greg Sorbara, and widely expected to remain Liberal. However, the other seat, Kitchener-Waterloo, had been held by Elizabeth Witmer of the Progressive Conservatives since 1990.¹ She resigned to pursue a career as chair of the Workplace Safety Insurance Board, leaving an opening for the Liberals, who typically finished second in the riding, and who regarded that riding as the key to a parliamentary majority. Some speculated that it was precisely this opportunity McGuinty sought when he nominated Witmer for that new public sector job, while Witmer, herself, stated publicly that her resignation was motivated by the health of her husband (Ferguson, 2012; Paige, 2012; Talaga, 2012).

In a way, the by-elections of September 6, 2012, did change parliamentary dynamics, but not in the Liberals' favour. While they held Vaughn, Kitchener-Waterloo elected New Democrat Catherine Fife, a victory that in part may reflect the "orange wave" that swept Canada during the 2011 federal election, and perhaps other ongoing issues, such as the labour dispute between Queen's Park and Ontario teachers. In addition, with the Liberals having replaced its leader on January 26, 2013, the situation immediately became and remains unstable. Whether the 2011 election results dissolve into an earlier-than-expected general campaign is a question we cannot, at present, determine. It

is less certain what that campaign would produce. What we could explore, however, was the manner in which the 2011 election transpired into the current less-than-stable result.

We approach this review of the 2011 election by drawing on party platforms, newspaper coverage of the campaign, publicly available public opinion polls, regional election results and an internet panel survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid at the conclusion of the 2011 election.

Vote Results and Regional Patterns

Results of the 2011 election are summarized in Table 1, which also displays the 2007 results for comparison.² While the Liberals held on with a minority government of 53 seats, they lost nearly 20 seats compared to 2007 and saw their vote share drop five percentage points. The two opposition parties saw gains, however the pattern is uneven. The voter momentum was more apparent for the NDP, which saw a six percentage-point increase in vote share and a gain of seven seats. The PCs, on the other hand, saw a more modest four percentage-point gain in vote share, but its seat count grew by 11.

In past elections, there has been substantial overlap in seats won by a party at one level of government and a similarly named party at another level, but that was less apparent in the 2011 election despite only five months elapsing since the federal vote. This suggests that the election was a first-order election in its own right (see Cutler 2008), dominated by concerns particular to Ontario, which we will explore below.

Table 1: Vote and seat results in 2007 and 2011.

	2007		2011		Change	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Liberal	42%	71	38%	53	-5%	-18
PC	32%	26	35%	37	4%	11
NDP	17%	10	23%	17	6%	7

Table 2: Regional vote and seat results in 2007 and 2011.

	2007					
	Liberal		PC		NDP	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Toronto	45.5%	18	23.7%	0	21.3%	4
GTA	47.3%	14	33.4%	4	10.8%	0
Hamilton/ Niagara	37.7%	5	33.2%	3	20.5%	3
East	40.2%	12	38.5%	10	11.8%	0
Southwest	39.7%	15	34.1%	9	14.6%	0
North	43.8%	7	14.6%	0	36.8%	3
Total	42.2%	71	31.8%	26	16.8%	10

	2011					
	Liberal		PC		NDP	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Toronto	45.0%	17	24.1%	0	27.1%	5
GTA	43.7%	13	35.5%	4	16.7%	1
Hamilton/ Niagara	35.2%	4	34.3%	3	26.5%	4
East	34.4%	8	43.9%	14	17.3%	0
Southwest	32.8%	7	40.6%	15	21.9%	2
North	32.0%	4	24.8%	1	40.5%	5
Total	37.6%	53	35.4%	37	22.7%	17

An examination of federal and provincial vote patterns in Ontario is facilitated by the fact that the province uses the same configuration of electoral constituencies created for the federal redistribution. The one exception is that there is an additional seat allocated to northern Ontario meaning that there are 107 provincial electoral districts, rather than the 106 federal constituencies. The boundaries south of the Nipissing (North Bay) riding are the same for both levels of government.

There were 45 seats won by different parties between the federal and Ontario elections of 2011, the majority of them being in the northern suburbs within Toronto, and the adjacent Greater Toronto Area (GTA) coterminous with the 905 area code up to the Mississauga/Oakville boundary. In most cases they were federal Conservative seats that the Liberals won provincially.

The swing in the province-wide popular vote between the 2007 and 2011 elections indicated a decline in the Liberal edge over the PCs from 10.4 to 2.2 percentage points. However, as reflected in Table 2, there were substantial variations by region.

In short, the election witnessed an extension in the previously established trend toward urban-rural polarization. For many years, Toronto and the larger urban centres have favoured the Liberals and to a lesser extent the NDP, while smaller cities and rural areas have been disproportionately PC. What was different in 2011 was that the trend has become further exaggerated. In Eastern and Southwestern Ontario, the PC margin over the Liberals expanded by well

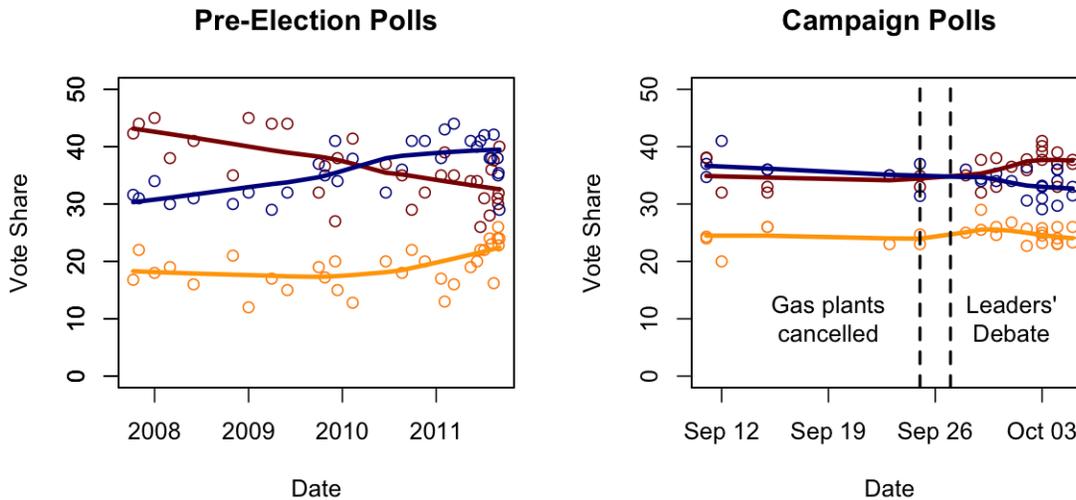
over 10 percentage points, while in the city of Toronto there was barely any change from 2007. To illustrate with some specific constituency examples, the narrowest 2007 losses for the PCs in Toronto had been in the ridings of Don Valley West and Eglinton-Lawrence, where their margins of defeat expanded by more than 15 percentage points in each, even though the party was gaining province wide.

It might be added that in the more rural Eastern and Southwestern sections of the province that the few constituencies not won by the PCs were in the urban concentrations of Ottawa, London and Windsor. The GTA and Hamilton-Niagara regional margins did move somewhat toward the PCs, but less so than the provincial average. Northern Ontario was the NDP's strongest area of growth moving from a seven-point deficit to the Liberals in 2007, to an eight-point advantage this time. A contributing factor in this increasing regional distinctiveness appeared to be a backlash to a McGuinty Liberal government program of proliferating wind turbines in rural areas that many saw as a visual blight.³

Pre-Campaign Context

Conditions for the Liberal vote and seat losses began to unfold well before the actual election campaign. Almost since its re-election in 2007, the party had been in a monotonic decline in public opinion. Since 2010 – more than a year before the election – the party had been trailing the Progressive Conservatives, as shown by a series of polls (see Figure 1, left panel). Although the 2007 election was also closely fought between the two parties, one of the key differences between the two was the rise of the NDP.

Figure 1: Public opinion polls before and during the election campaign.



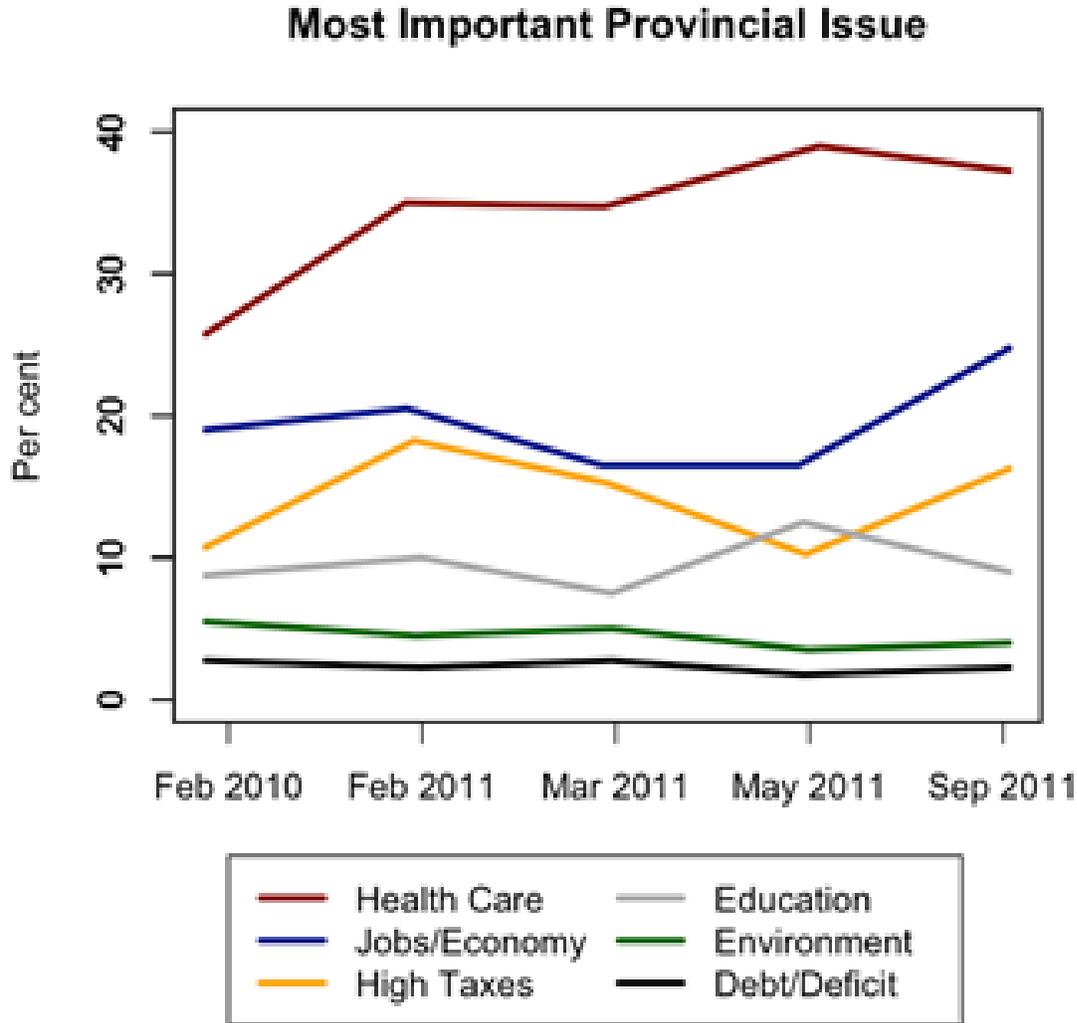
Note: The graph on the left shows publicly available public opinion polls prior to the election. The graph on the right shows polls just before and during the campaign. Lines are lowest smooths with a span of .75. campaign.⁴

Starting halfway through 2010, the NDP had been steadily increasing its support in Ontario, coinciding with two major developments. First, on July 1 of that year the Ontario government implemented the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), which the NDP strongly opposed, making an exemption for home heating fuel from the HST a key element of its criticisms of the government and, later, its platform for the 2011 campaign. Second, the federal election in May 2011 saw a dramatic increase in support for the federal NDP in both Quebec and Ontario, contributing to an increase in support for the provincial party. Despite the NDP's growing support, the net effect of these developments was to entrench the Progressive Conservatives in first place for more than a year prior to the election

Policy Positioning

The voters' issue agenda was reasonably clear in the two years prior to the 2011 election campaign: health care was consistently selected as the most important issue, according to Nanos Research (see Figure 2). All three parties addressed this, placing health care commitments at the centre of the policy platforms that they issued. However, there were other controversies and issues that dominated media and political discussion over the life of the previous legislature, in particular, taxes and the economy. In fact, these two increased in salience as the election neared.

Figure 2: The most important provincial issues, as reported by Nanos Research, prior to the election campaign.



Regarding taxes, this issue was really about the McGuinty government’s introduction of the HST. Both the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives tried to capitalize on opposition to the tax, not by promising to get rid of it, but by promising various ways of limiting its impact. Although the McGuinty government introduced the HST much more adroitly than did the Campbell government in British Columbia, the Liberals were not immune to public opposition. Concerns expressed about the economy and jobs were not about such

specific policies, but were a reflection of the profound difficulties facing the manufacturing sector in Ontario in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis.

Campaigning against an unpopular incumbent government, the PCs adopted some of the rhetoric that accompanied Barack Obama into the White House in 2008, namely, “change.” They labeled their policy platform the *Changebook* and every section of the document was titled with the word “Change.” As for the specific policies the party emphasized, the party eliminated

political space between themselves and the Liberals on some issues (e.g., they adopted the same conservative targets for reducing corporate taxes and eliminating the deficits as well as the commitment to close coal-fired power plants) and adopted a series of fairly banal, business-friendly policy initiatives meant to appeal to the business community, such as a reduction in regulations governing business activity and a small-business Bill of Rights. However, the PCs also adopted several high-profile policies that can only be described as wedge issues.

First, they added several measures hostile to trade unions such as requiring secret ballot votes to certify all applications for representation (currently, the Ontario Labour Relations Board may certify unions as a bargaining agent without a vote if 55 per cent of the employees join a union), requiring public sector unions to bid on public service contracts to deliver work they currently do and, lastly, placing more restrictions on union expenditures, political expenditures in particular. Second, they called for changes to corrections policies, requiring prisoners to perform community service, such as cleaning parks or removing graffiti, for free (Ontario Progressive Conservative Party 2011). In general, this policy positioning suggests a very different approach from the one the party took in 2007 where John Tory tried to present a more inclusive platform of extending public financing to non-Catholic religious schools. The Progressive Conservatives under Tim Hudak adopted a much harsher, ideological stance.

Where the PCs ventured into harsher ideological territory to define themselves in contrast to the Liberals, the governing party developed a platform with few specific commitments. Most of the Liberal's policy platform is not prospective, but a recapitulation of past policies, providing an

emphasis on their successes and using these to justify re-election. The party emphasized its previous record on secondary and post-secondary education as having prepared Ontario's workforce for post-industrial demands. In the same vein, the Liberals took great pains to emphasize its record in attracting investment in the field of green technologies. There were two prominent exceptions to this platform of justifying past accomplishments. Namely, the party promised to cover up to 30 percent of the tuition costs of undergraduate education, and it promised to introduce a tax credit for small businesses that hire skilled Canadian newcomers (Ontario Liberal Party 2011).

On the economy, the Liberals essentially adopted the frame "stability in difficult times," not dissimilar to rhetoric used by the federal Conservative Party in 2008 and 2011. The front page of their campaign platform quoted Premier McGuinty as saying: "These are uncertain times for the global economy. These are challenging times for our families. This is our plan to help. This is our way forward, together." This is followed on page 4 by a full-page colour photo from a stock market exchange showing only negative numbers followed by a page of text that places Ontario in a global context, featuring several newspaper headlines emphasizing the economic troubles that have plagued the industrialized world since 2008.

The NDP's platform also emphasized the theme of "change," but emphasized that its "change" is aimed to make things easier and more affordable for "people like you." For example, the party proposed a cap on weekly increases on gas prices. Moreover, it proposed to finance a reduction in electricity costs by reorganizing the electricity network into one public entity and by capping CEO salaries. The party proposed a similar cap on CEO salaries within the health care sector (Ontario New

Democratic Party 2011).

While some of these resemble knee-jerk populist policies, one of the major elements of the NDP platform – the exemption from the HST for gas, electricity and home heating – was very carefully thought out. The shift from the previous regime of a provincial sales tax and the GST also meant a shift in philosophy to a value added tax which can provide some benefits to any businesses that add value to products (i.e., manufacturers). However, it also meant that the HST was to be paid on some products and services which previously had been exempt from the provincial sales tax. The NDP was thus caught in something of a dilemma. Some groups within the party's universe, such as the Canadian Auto Workers and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, were cautiously supportive of the initiative, particularly because the Liberal government had implemented the HST in conjunction with new tax credits for low- and middle-income taxpayers (Lightman and Mitchell 2009). At the same time, the public's overwhelming opposition to the tax created a powerful electoral and populist temptation to oppose the policy. The party's policy on eliminating the HST on home heating fuel, electricity and gas was the resulting compromise.

While the NDP started and finished the campaign in third place, again placing the party in that awkward space on the ideological, electoral and media landscape, the party did offer something new. This was the first campaign led by Andrea Horwath, not the first woman to lead an Ontario political party,⁵ but arguably the one with the highest profile. Moreover, beyond her gender, Horwath represented a different kind of break, being the leader who had no link to the five controversial years the party spent in government from 1990 to 1995. Horwath only entered politics as a Hamilton city councillor in 1997, was elected to Queen's

Park in a 2004 by-election, and won the party leadership in 2009. It is perhaps a combination of her minimal affiliation with the Bob Rae government and her personal working-class background that has led to a clearly populist approach to politics in Ontario. To her credit, this has contributed to an increase in popularity and the party was able to expand its reach into new ridings, winning in Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Essex, and Toronto-Davenport. But this has also caused her some trouble. For example, the party's demand for exemptions to the HST and Horwath's tentative embraces of wind power opponents in rural Ontario have caused significant concern among environmentalists for their anti-conservationist consequences.

One final comment is worth making regarding the NDP's platform. This platform strongly reinforces the trend to move the party further away from its historic role as an ideological party. Aside from its rather vague commitment to reorganize the electricity network into one public entity and to roll back corporate tax cuts, much of its economic platform involves shifting around tax credits to co-ordinate particular types of economic activity. For example, it pushed for a tax credit to subsidize investment in machinery and equipment in Ontario and a tax credit to subsidize full-time, permanent employment.

Campaign Dynamics, Media Coverage & Public Opinion

Despite the McGuinty government's unpopularity and the subsequent competitive election, the 2011 Ontario election failed to generate a great deal of popular excitement. Indeed, turnout in the provincial election was 49 percent, continuing a twenty-year trend of declining turnout (see Table 3).

Despite this, some issues were clearly more important than others in the

party's mind. One thing to assess is what the election campaign was, in fact, about. Parties go to great lengths to make election campaigns "about" issues where voters hold positive impressions about them and minimize the attention paid to issues where voters hold negative impressions (Clarke et al., 68-86, 1990; Belanger and Meguid,

2008; Petrocik 1996). Of course, each political party evokes different responses on different issues in voters' minds and so there is a conflict within a campaign to set the tone. Watching, reporting and shaping these conflicts is the press, which sometimes have different conceptions of what the election is, in fact, "about" (Soroka 2002).

Table 3: Turnout in Ontario elections, 1990-2011

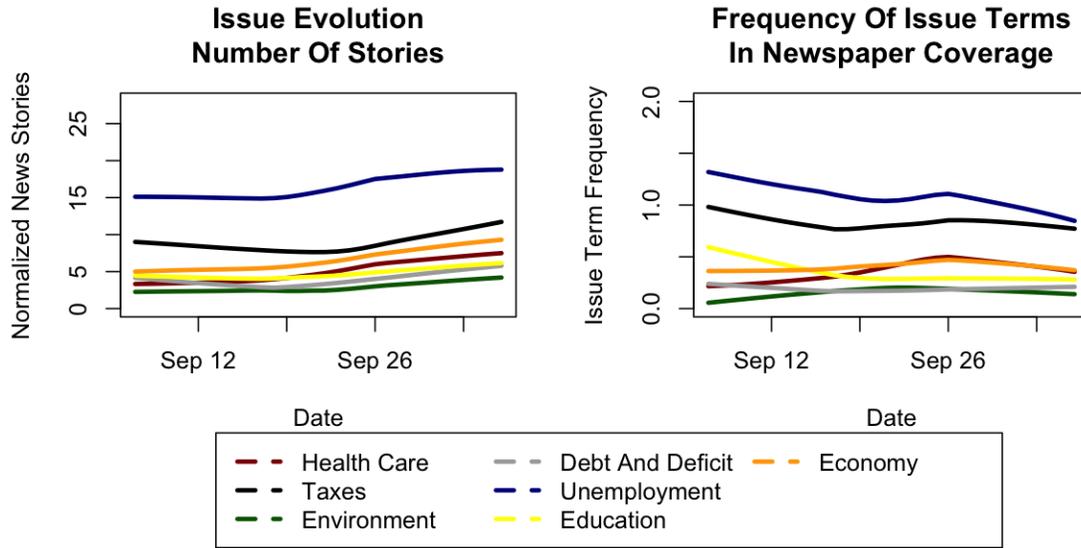
Year	Turnout
1990	64.4
1995	62.9
1999	58.3
2003	56.8
2007	52.1
2011	49.2

There is some evidence to suggest that the issues that dominated the 2011 Ontario campaign differed in ranking to the issues voters expressed in the Nanos public opinion surveys in Figure 2. We examined the issues covered by Ontario newspapers by gathering news stories from seven daily newspapers⁶ using a search string to capture election-related stories (see appendix for all details). Then, we constructed short dictionaries of terms that corresponded to each issue.

The left-hand panel in Figure 3 shows the number of news stories per day – divided by the number of terms in each dictionary – that contained terms from that dictionary. The panel on the right shows the average daily frequency of each dictionary's terms, again, divided by the number of terms in each dictionary. Unemployment and taxes were discussed more frequently than health care. The "economy" was discussed

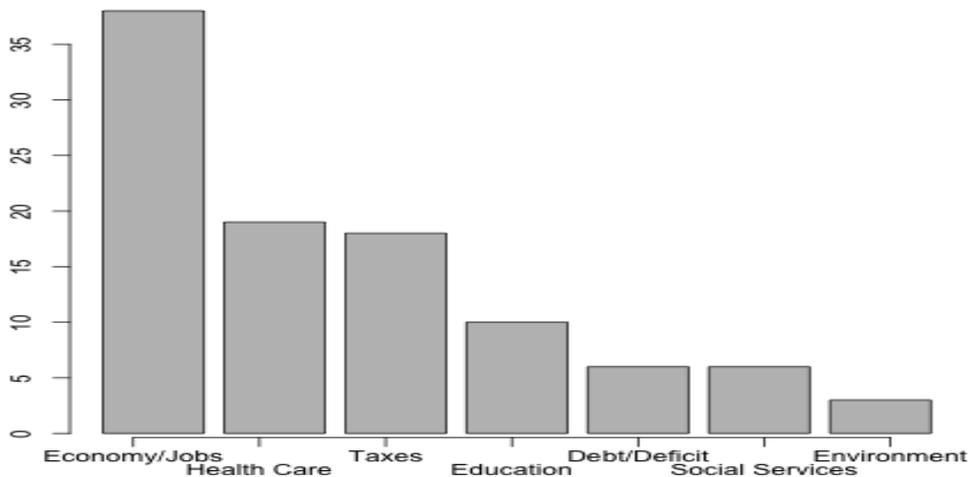
somewhat more frequently than health care. Other issues came far behind. Whether this was an example of the media's independent agenda-setting function or a response to decisions made by the political parties requires a fine-grained analysis that is beyond our current scope. Whatever the source of this type of media coverage, there is evidence to suggest that this development was not without consequence. Figure 4 shows the issues identified as the most important issue that determined the votes for respondents to Ipsos-Reid's internet panel survey for the Ontario provincial election.⁷ These results are clearly different from those identified by Nanos' telephone survey by random-digit dialing, but they mirror findings by Stephenson (2011), also drawn from a separate, internet panel survey. Her results showed that voters selected the economy to be the biggest issue (30 percent) followed by taxes and health care (21

Figure 3: Media agendas over the course of the campaign.



Note: The left panel graphs the number of news stories that contain terms in each dictionary. The graph on the right shows the average daily frequency of each dictionary's terms. Lines are lowess smooths through data points with a span of .75.

Figure 4: Most Important Issue in 2011 Ontario Election



Note: This graph the distribution of issues respondents selected as the most important issue in determining their vote from Ipsos-Reid's Ontario 2011 panel survey.

Table 4: Most important issue by 2011 party support (cell entries are percentages)

	Liberal to PC	Liberal to Liberal	Liberal To NDP
Taxes	56	7	38
Health Care	26	64	49
Debt/deficit	17	9	3
Education	1	20	10

percent). Perhaps voter priorities followed media coverage. While it is possible that the different survey modes (telephone, probability sample versus internet, panel survey) are responsible for the different results, the fact that Nanos reported an increasing concern with economic issues and the high levels of news coverage dedicated to taxes and economic issues, it is more likely that voters' issue priorities followed the media and political agendas, rather than the other way around.

The salience of the tax issue, particularly the HST, seems to have helped both the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives gain votes from 2007 to 2011 (see Table 4). One interesting cell entry is the 56 percent of people who moved to the PCs from the Liberals, citing taxes as the most important issue; 38 percent of Liberal-to-NDP switchers and only seven percent of Liberal "core" supporters did the same. Among those who voted for the Liberal party in both elections, 64 percent cited health care as the most important issue. But this single issue was also cited by a substantial number of Liberal defectors.

Why, then, were the Progressive Conservatives and Tim Hudak unable to capitalize on their substantial pre-election lead and win a majority? It is worth pointing out that, in addition to shifts in voter priorities, the 2011 election campaign was marked by substantial shifts in vote intention

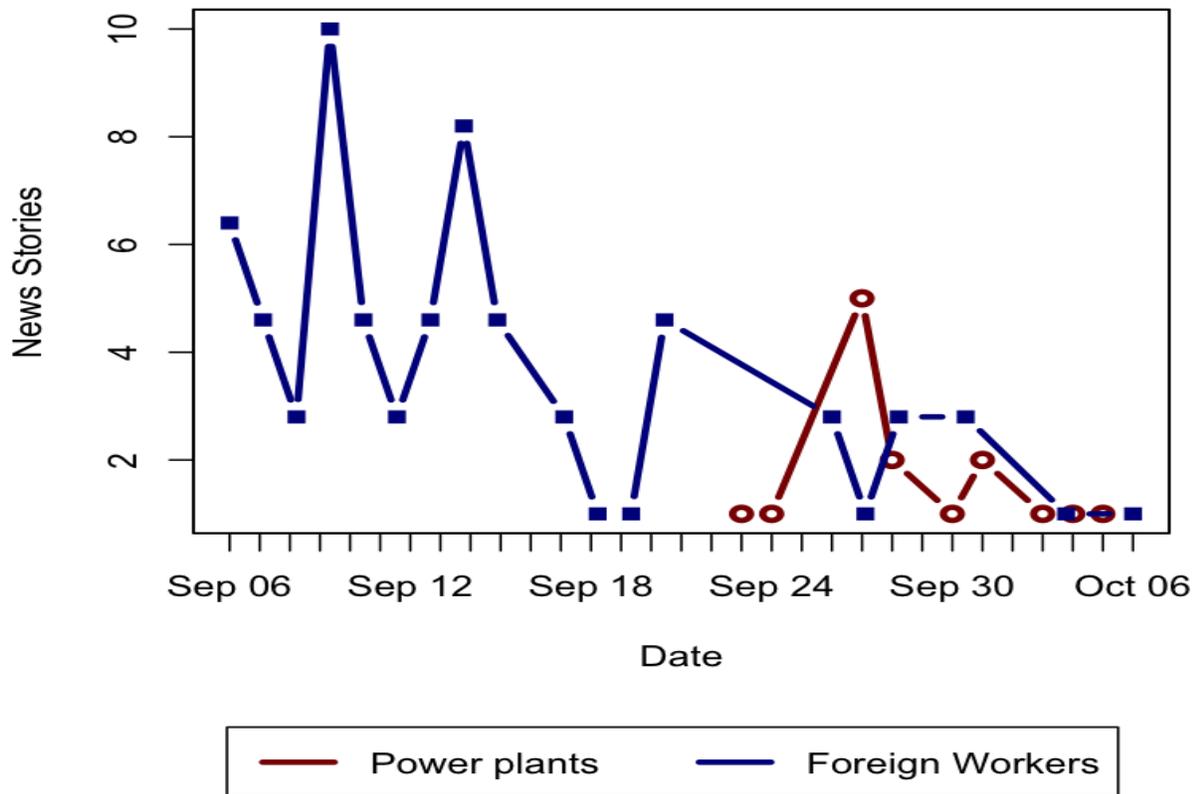
(see Figure 1, right panel). These two shifts coincided with three important events. First, Hudak – perhaps emboldened by his lead and building on the strategy of including hot-button wedge issues in his platform – attacked a Liberal policy proposal to provide employers with a tax credit if they hired new Canadians. Hudak and the PC party attacked the measure over several days as favouring "foreign workers." Second, on September 25, just prior to the leaders' debate, the Liberals announced the cancellation of a contentious natural gas-fired power plant in Mississauga. Hudak's strategy of stoking xenophobic sentiment was widely criticized and it gained far greater attention (overwhelmingly negative) than did the Liberal proposal to cancel the power plants (see Figure 5). Third, and lastly, the major shift occurred just after the leader's debate, as shown in the right pane of Figure 1.

We can provide some circumstantial evidence to support the impact of each of these events. First, in terms of Hudak's comments about "foreign workers," Figure 5 shows that the media seized on that issue to a much greater degree than it did to McGuinty's decision to cancel the Mississauga power plant. Tellingly, coverage of the issue died as soon as the PCs dropped the term from radio advertising on September 12, signaling that they would step back from the term. We believe that this episode was costly for the PCs in that it

contributed to voters' distrust of Hudak as leader and his party in general. Voters who shifted to the PCs in 2011, after having supported the Liberals in 2007, did so

overwhelmingly because of a disappointment with the Liberals, rather than because of any kind of positive attraction to the PC leader or the platform.

Figure 5: Relative impact on media coverage of Hudak's "foreign workers" criticisms and the Liberals' cancellation of the Mississauga power plant.



Secondly, some admittedly very circumstantial evidence that the decision to cancel the Mississauga plant and the importance of the television debate were both highly influential is seen in Table 5, which lists Ipsos survey respondents' timing of vote choice. What is notable here is the proportion of PC voters who reported making up their mind to vote that way *before* the election began, compared to the proportion of Liberal and NDP voters who

reported deciding to support their party *after* the debates. This is consistent with the shift in public opinion toward the Liberals in the second half of the campaign and consistent with the general impression that much of Hudak's support in the campaign came as a result of opposition to policies by the Liberal government, but that the PCs failed to build on this with a hard-edged campaign that alienated centrist voters.

Table 5: Timing of vote decision by vote, percentage of Ipsos-Reid 2011 Ontario Panel Survey respondents

	Liberal	NDP	PC
Before the campaign started	39	37	55
Before the debates	20	17	17
Shortly after the debates	17	20	13
In the last week of the campaign	16	17	10
In the voting booth today	8	9	5

Conclusion

The May 2011 federal election was not the only campaign in that year to show how dramatically campaign events can impact outcomes. The outcome of Ontario's general election was not easily foreseeable. The McGuinty Liberals had been languishing in public opinion polls for years and they had been in power during a time when the province went through a profound economic recession. Moreover, the Liberals were also faced with a resurgent NDP that heavily emphasized populist issues.

The Ontario 2011 election campaign exhibited significant and important dynamics that mattered for the outcome. The issues that survey respondents selected as the most important to their vote differed substantially from issues that citizens reported as being the most important in the two years prior to the election. Whether this is evidence of media agenda-setting or political agenda-setting is not clear, but what is clear is that the political discussion shifted from health care to taxes and the economy as soon as the election began. This hurt the Liberals substantially. However, despite Tim

Hudak's lead in the polls at the start of the campaign, events shifted public opinion. His attack on foreign workers attracted substantial negative media coverage – and it reinforced voter hesitations about him and his party. Towards the latter part of the campaign, Liberal fortunes recovered, paving the way leading to their re-election, albeit with a much reduced parliamentary presence. While it may be too much to say that the Liberals won the election campaign, it does seem that the Progressive Conservatives lost it.

Appendix

We used the *tm* package available for the open source statistical software package R to conduct basic content analysis. Doing so required the construction of a function to read in news stories in the particular format delivered by ProQuest’s Canadian Newsstand database. These functions are available for download from Kiss’ faculty webpage at Wilfrid Laurier University (Google search: wlu.ca Simon Kiss). Then we pre-processed these texts by stripping out whitespace, punctuation, combined some two-word phrases into one words (i.e. climate change became climate change), converted all words to lower-case letters and stemmed the articles using R’s implementation of the Porter Stemmer. Then we constructed seven issue dictionaries to

measure salience of various political issues and applied the Porter Stemmer to them. These are in the second column of Table 6. We tabulated the frequency of each term in each of the term dictionaries. Some terms appeared very rarely and these were eliminated arbitrarily. The final, stemmed dictionary terms are in the third column. Then, for each dictionary, the number of news stories that contained at least one of the words was tabulated for each day and divided by the number of terms in the dictionary to account for the fact that some dictionaries have three, while others only two or one terms in them. The second measure of the media agenda was calculated by calculated the average frequency of all the dictionary terms for each day, again for each dictionary, and divided by the number of terms in each dictionary.

Table 6: Issue dictionaries

Issue	Stemmed First Dictionary	Stemmed Second dictionary
Health care	Hospit, healthcar, doctor, physician, nurs	Hospit, healthcar
Taxes	Hst, tax	Hst tax
Jobs / Unemployment	Job, unemploy, apprenticeship, apprentice	Job
Environmental issues	Climatechang, solar, wind, renew, greenenergi, pollut	Solar, wind, greenergi
Education	teacher, educat, student, school	Educ, student, school
Debt/ Deficit	Debt, deficit	Debt, deficit
The Economy	Economy, economi	Econom, economi

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Endnotes:

¹ Elizabeth Witmer was originally elected in 1990 as a PC member to the riding of Waterloo North. The constituency changed to Kitchener-Waterloo in 1999.

² For an analysis of the 2007 Ontario election, see Perrella et al. (2008).

³ It might be noted that the Green Party also contested seats throughout the province, but saw its vote fade from eight to 2.9 percent, their approximate level in 2003, and exceed 10 percent of the vote in only one constituency, Dufferin-Caledon, where the Green Party candidate, Rob Strang, received 14.6 percent of the vote.

⁴ The instability of the present situation is reflected in the fact that while the Conservatives returned to this position almost immediately after the election, the Liberals regained first place after Kathleen Wynne was sworn in as premier. See, for instance, Ontario seat projections based on aggregated polls: <http://www.lispop.ca/Ontarioseatprojection.html>.

⁵ The Ontario Liberals elected in 1992 Lyn McLeod, the province's first female leader of a major political party.

⁶ The newspapers examined are: *Globe & Mail*, *National Post*, *Waterloo Region Record*, *Hamilton Spectator*, *Toronto Star*, *Windsor Star* and *Ottawa Citizen*.

⁷ Ipsos Reid conducted a survey of a randomly selected sample of its internet panelists the day of the Ontario election. As a result, the demographics of the survey participants differ markedly from the Ontario population. For example, the sample was heavily skewed to older, female Ontarians, away from younger, male Ontarians. To account for this, we weighted the sample for age and gender according to the 2011 census statistics for Ontario. All statistics reported here are weighted. On the comparable merits of internet panel surveys compared to probability samples from telephone surveys, see Ansolabehere and Schaffner (2011).