Fighting Elections: Cross-Level Political Party Integration in Ontario

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There's nothing that brings people together more than fighting an identified, consistent enemy. That's what really ties you together.

Doug Tyler, former provincial minister and Liberal party activist in New Brunswick

Introduction

How political parties fight elections in Canada provides an interesting contrast to the accepted view that, across the federal–provincial divide, they are disentangled organizations (Bakvis and Tanguay, 2008: 129; Dyck, 1991: 162; Stewart and Carty, 2006: 97; Wolinetz and Carty, 2006: 54). Most students of Canadian political parties agree that, unlike the tightly knit groups that existed in the first half of the twentieth century, parties that share a label at the provincial and federal level have since grown apart. In short, organizational independence is assumed: parties have simply succumbed to the demands of disciplined parliamentary government and sub-national organizations have given up on those institutions of intrastate federalism—such as the Senate—to provide even a modicum of provincial representation (Cairns, 1979: 6; Wolinetz and

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Carty, 2006: 67). Consequently, provincial parties themselves became the champions of provincial interests. When policy clashes with the federal government inevitably occurred, a separate form of organization allowed party cousins to compete with one another for public support (Painter, 1991: 269). Disassociation also meant that, when necessary, parties could distinguish themselves from an unpopular affiliate at the other level.

For most parties, however, there has never been complete detachment. The New Democratic party is a fully integrated organization. Joining a provincial NDP results in an automatic membership in the federal party. In the Liberal party, federal–provincial organizational integration can be found in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The unifying links that remain between differentiated federal and provincial party cousins (the Liberal party in the remaining five provinces and the Conservative party in all ten) primarily involve sharing party activists and are considered to be informal (Carty, 1994; Dyck, 1991: 164). But an informal link can still be significant. The online edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines a partisan as "an adherent or proponent of a party, cause, person, etc.; especially a devoted or zealous supporter." Party activists embody this definition and for many their ties are to the same party label at both levels of government (Sayers and Koop, 2005). Aside from historical accounts, there has been no recent study of how parties that share a label fight elections; in other words, we do not know whether, and to what extent, party cousins today will stretch their organizations across the federal–provincial divide in order to help the other win an election. If campaign co-operation between parties does occur, the "informal" link between party cousins may take on a deeper significance.

This paper examines cross-level electoral co-operation between Conservative and Liberal parties in Ontario. This province is a good case study since campaign collaboration is facilitated by party systems that closely mirror one another, and the Liberal and Conservative parties most often trade the seat of power. Furthermore, there were several provincial and federal elections between 2003 and 2007 which created an opportunity to examine, and then re-examine, these co-operative relationships. I argue that both party activists and election campaigns serve as critical connections between parties with identical partisan complexions. The effect is to produce considerable integration between the parties at the federal and provincial level. Electoral collaboration between party cousins occurs in many ways; the parties sometimes depend on this type of co-operation, and activists at the elite level will encourage and facilitate electoral collaboration in order to help their affiliate at the other level win government. The research shows that, in Ontario, political parties do reach across the federal divide to work co-operatively during elections, and this forges unity between them.

Abstract. Conventional wisdom about the structure of political parties in Canada has emphasized their confederal nature. In other words (and the New Democratic party excepted), parties with identical partisan complexions at the federal and provincial levels are thought to operate in "two political worlds." This paper argues that election campaigns are a key integrating link between parties. How they fight elections reveals extensive cross-level co-operation, particularly through shared activists (local party activists, party staff and party professionals) and technological expertise. This has the effect of shrinking the space between party cousins and forges unity between them. While there are certain obstacles to electoral collaboration, there are also incentives for these parties to work to maintain and strengthen their ties with their partisan cousin at the other level. These findings make an important contribution by directly challenging the notion that Canada's federal system has led to increasingly disentangled political parties.

Résumé. L'opinion communément admise au sujet de la structure des partis politiques au Canada a mis l'accent sur leur nature confédérale. En d'autres termes (exception faite du Nouveau Parti démocratique), on considère en général que les partis à caractère partisan identique au palier fédéral et provincial fonctionnent dans «deux mondes politiques à part». Le présent article avance que les campagnes électorales constituent un facteur d'intégration clé entre les différents niveaux d'un parti. La façon dont un parti dispute une élection révèle un haut degré de coopération entre les organisations provinciales et fédérales, surtout du fait qu'ils partagent des militants communs (militants locaux, personnel politique et professionnels du parti) et leur expertise technologique. Ce phénomène tend à rétrécir l'espace entre cousins du même parti et à bâtir l'unité d'organisation entre les deux niveaux. Même s'il y a des obstacles inévitables à la collaboration électorale, les partis cousins ont de bonnes raisons de veiller à maintenir et à renforcer leurs liens réciproques. Ces conclusions apportent une contribution importante à l'étude des partis politiques, en contestant directement l'idée que le système fédéral au Canada a encouragé les partis politiques de même allégeance à mener leurs activités de manière indépendante.

While this particular study focuses on cross-level party collaboration in Ontario, the pattern found here can be applied to other provinces. Co-operation between party affiliates is most likely to occur where the party itself is still fully integrated, such as the NDP across Canada and where party organizations are coherent and substantially overlapping (the Atlantic provinces primarily, but also the Liberal party in Saskatchewan). Campaign collaboration can be fluid on the federalist side in Quebec, but the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois are "sister" parties that consistently work together during elections. Electoral collaboration is less likely when a party is split at the federal level (for example, during the years of Reform/Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative party) or when there are deep internal conflicts that can divide provincial members (such as the factional feud between Liberal supporters of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin). Co-operation may also be affected when the provincial party is an amalgam of two or more parties (the provincial Liberal party in British Columbia, for example, or the Saskatchewan party), or where the organizations have little overlap (Manitoba and Alberta), though the degree to which electoral assistance is depressed by these factors can vary.[1]

There are also barriers to co-operation, and a striking exception to the pattern found here is the bitter feud between Danny Williams, Con-

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servative premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper. These barriers are addressed towards the end of the article, as evidence suggests that co-operation is the norm and that parties work to maintain and strengthen their ties with their partisan cousins at the other level. These findings challenge the conventional wisdom that political parties in Canada are largely disassociated organizations.

After a brief overview of the methodology, a theoretical framework is set out to conceptualize co-operation. Next, the article will outline ways in which party cousins in Ontario collaborate. An examination of the extent of electoral collaboration in this province will follow. The article concludes with a brief examination of barriers to co-operation and thoughts on where research on co-ordinated campaigning across the levels can lead.

Methodology

This research is based on interviews with ten professional party activists in the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), and the Ontario provincial Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties.[2] On average, each interview lasted for 90 minutes and some activists were interviewed several times. Each interview was taped and the discussion later transcribed. This article uses a number of quotations from the participants but their anonymity has been respected. Questions posed to the participants concerned the 2004 and 2006 federal campaigns and the 2003 and 2007 Ontario elections.

While ten interviews may seem too few, we must be reminded of the small handful of elite political organizers in Canada. Few people know about the strategic decisions made in federal and provincial elections. Those who have control over the central campaign are often the only ones with the authority to release manpower, agree to endorsements by leaders, provide tour assistance, organize supportive rallies, and provide technical support, among other aids, to a cousin at the other level. The interview net was cast more widely, but there were repeated referrals back to one or two individuals in each party who had the "best" information on the topic, so these are the top sources. The information gathered from the party professionals has been complemented by the secondary literature on Canada's political parties and Canadian elections and by journalistic accounts of recent elections.

Leaders' Entourages and the Policy/Organization Divide in a Campaign

A framework is needed in order to conceptualize how parties manage electoral co-operation. Campaign co-ordination can be a significant under-

taking, particularly in large provinces. To whom, for instance, would a provincial party direct a request for assistance? Likewise, who in a federal party would be responsible for ensuring that the necessary support is delivered?

Sid Noel's theoretical work (2007) on a leader's "entourage" is a helpful starting point. An entourage is the small collection of loyal individuals that surround a leader. In most cases, members of the entourage are political professionals who provide specialized services that help win leadership contests (Noel, 2007: 206). These include campaign management and strategy, fundraising, polling, policy direction and communications advice. If successful, the entourage will provide the same support for that leader during an election by taking on the same key roles in a central campaign. Because these jobs require different skills, the entourage itself can be divided into two groups. The first group primarily concerns itself with policy. The policy advisors develop a campaign platform that contains "promises" with wide appeal. They ensure that the leader and candidates have good briefing notes on the policies, that talking points are attached, that proposals fall within a set budget and that any policy attacks by the opposition can be rebuffed.

The second group concentrates on electoral strategy and tactics; in other words, they are focused on campaign organization. These professionals will develop an overarching campaign theme, plan the leader's tour, approve or reject campaign ads, determine which portions of the electorate will receive a focused appeal, target "winnable" ridings, send workers to certain constituencies and undertake campaign adjustments based on polling information.

These two teams (policy and organization) within the leader's circle work together on a campaign. There is a high level of communication between them to ensure that party policies are consistent with the overall message of the campaign and that they appeal to the party's targeted voters and ridings. As the groups themselves have very different tasks, some members of the entourage (such as the campaign manager or director of communications) will have a foot in both camps to facilitate electoral co-ordination between them. The functional division is displayed in Figure 1 below, with the arrows indicating the degree of co-ordination between the two.

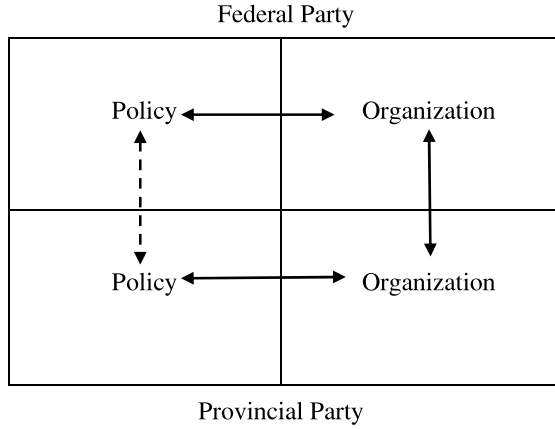
Both federal and provincial parties appear to replicate this setup. The elite group of people who prepare and execute central campaigns tend to fall into one of these two categories: those who work intensely on policy and those who work primarily on campaign organization. The people within these groups are political professionals loyal to both leader and party. A few will float between these groups while others remain firmly within their field of expertise.

FIGURE 1

For federal and provincial parties with identical partisan affiliation, the question is whether there are interactions between the professionals across the levels to co-ordinate campaigns to help "their" party win. Because there are only a small number of elite activists in Canada, many of the political professionals who work on campaigns know their counterparts at the other level, in fact, many have worked on campaigns together. In other words, since parties share both voters and members (Esselment, 2007), and if we accept that party loyalty is an integral part of being a partisan, then collaboration would be expected. Figure 2 illustrates the ideal integrative relationship of electoral collaboration between party cousins.

There is a connection between the policy and organization people at their respective levels, indicated by the horizontal arrow pointing in both directions. It would also be expected that the "organization" groups of the provincial and federal parties would communicate extensively both before and during an election campaign, indicated by the arrows crossing vertically in the diagram. Federal party organizers often need man-

FIGURE 2



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power (in the form of constituency campaign managers, provincial tour advisors, MPP involvement in canvassing, election-day co-ordinators) technical resources, and fundraising assistance to help them win an election. To that end, a provincial party cousin can make a contribution by accessing its own resources and activating them on behalf of the federal party. The same can be true of provincial parties needing federal party assistance. The organization groups can co-ordinate a shared effort in this respect.

In contrast, there is less connection between the policy groups at the federal and provincial levels.[3] This allows room for "provincial interests" which can require party cousins to distance themselves from one other. Provincial parties generally eschew policy demands by the federal party. Provincial policies must instead be devised to fit provincial jurisdictions, the particular ideology of party members and what is perceived to be electorally palatable. A provincial party may take policy stances that contradict the policies of its federal counterpart. The dotted line between the policy groups suggests that some policy co-ordination will take place, often in the form of a "courtesy" such as forewarning about harmful policy announcements (provincial tax hikes before a federal election, for example) or one party cousin may altogether avoid policy announcements that may cause the other harm during an election. Complete party integration would be necessary to have a solid line connecting the policy groups on the vertical axis.

With this framework in mind, the next section sets out the various ways party cousins can co-operate during elections. Afterwards, the article will examine how this occurs in Ontario between federal and provincial Conservative and Liberal parties.[4]

Types of Co-operation

Electoral co-operation can take various forms, but ten broad categories can be identified as ways in which party cousins can help each other fight elections. In each of these areas, co-ordination usually occurs through the political professionals in a leader's entourage.

1. Sharing Activists

Activists are the backbone of political parties and, where possible, party activists tend to belong to the same party at both levels of government (Esselment, 2007; Sayers and Koop, 2005). As a result, most will fight elections on behalf of their party regardless of whether the election battle is at the provincial or federal level. This type of co-operation is the driving force behind many campaigns. While political professionals have least control over volunteers on the ground, most have found that the

same people consistently come out to campaign. Leading by example, party leaders and their elected officials will often support their party cousin by endorsing its leader and their field of candidates, canvassing with a candidate, and attending fundraisers.

Secondly, party professionals will also encourage—and sometimes direct—party staffers (those employed at the party headquarters or in the legislature) to work for the cousin during the election. These staff activists will often be "loaned" to the other party to help manage campaigns or provide logistical or advance support to a leader's tour.[5]

Likewise, political professionals themselves will often move from one level to another to provide a central campaign with expertise. This may involve setting up and running a war room, writing a platform, or offering advice on poll results. Additionally, federal staff paid to organize provincially may be asked to redirect their efforts to a provincial campaign in order to boost an affiliate's electoral chances.

2. Technology

A second form of collaboration involves technology. Parties across the federal–provincial divide will often share software that assists in identifying voters. They may also employ the same companies for contacting voters and share phone banks for use by their own volunteers. Further, party affiliates use sophisticated video-conferencing systems in order to provide campaign training to their activists at both levels. They may also borrow IT experts from the other level to help with troubleshooting computer programs during the election, or for managing an election website.

3. Networking Conferences

Third, parties co-operate to share best practices and educate each other in campaign techniques. Open to activists at both levels, large conferences are planned to bring together individuals interested in many aspects of campaigning, such as how to interact with the media or to clarify electoral rules, such as legislation governing the raising and spending of election funds. Similarly, federal parties will also send their own campaign experts directly to individual provinces for a more concise sharing of successful campaign strategies.

4. Policy Announcements

Parties have also been known to time good news policy announcements for the benefit of their campaigning (or soon-to-be campaigning) cousins. Likewise, policy announcements that may harm the electoral chances of an affiliate may be delayed or avoided altogether.

5. Fundraising

While strict financing laws guide the manner in which election money is raised and spent, it is not uncommon for elected officials to help a counterpart at a fundraising event by encouraging their own activists to attend or by being a guest speaker to attract a wider audience. Party cousins will also extend courtesies to one another by ensuring their fundraising events do not overlap.

6. Campaign Platform

In those provinces where parties are particularly close or even integrated, counterparts may work together on an election platform. In these cases there will often be similarities in the campaign documents, if not in substance then certainly in style.

7. Message Support

Parties with identical partisan affiliation may also support one another on the "messages" contained in the other's campaign. This type of policy co-ordination usually occurs through elected members and can reinforce a key plank of the platform, or remedy a gaffe that could potentially send the campaigning party off its main messages.

8. Infrastructure

While not as common, some parties have been able to share infrastructure, particularly in the form of housing their headquarters together. Both parties save money on rent and administrative staff.

9. Structural Connection

A structural connection between party cousins is also a less common form of co-operation, but it does exist. In this case, a person from one level is designated to be the liaison between the two parties. The liaison performs the task of informing the party at the other level about election readiness preparations and where assistance is required to fill gaps in campaign strategy. Ideally, the party being informed then organizes to ensure the cousin has the resources it needs to mount an effective campaign.

10. Candidate Recruitment

A final category of co-operation involves candidate recruitment. Where a party may be weak in a certain riding, an incumbent member at the other level may be approached to help find a good candidate. Likewise,

co-operation also takes the form of standing agreements preventing party cousins from "poaching" each other's candidates.

With these ten categories in mind, to what extent does electoral co-operation occur in Ontario?

The Ontario Case

The Progressive Conservative Party

Co-operation during campaigns has occurred in many ways, but focuses primarily on sharing activists. A senior campaign official for the Conservative party of Canada confirmed that, in Ontario: "The majority of people are members of both parties and usually will come out to help whether the election is provincial or federal" (personal interview, November 2006).[6]

The two Conservative parties also encourage their staff to campaign for fellow Conservatives during an election.[7] Staffers with previous experience managing campaigns will often be placed in local ridings identified as "winnable." Similarly, paid organizers working for a cousin can provide valuable assistance securing a get-out-the-vote (GOTV) plan, or setting up a leader's tour, for example. On federal election day, provincial party headquarters and the partisan staff at Queen's Park will be "noticeably absent" because they will all be working to get voters to the polls. In the 2006 federal election, campaign co-chair for the CPC John Reynolds was confident about the support the federal party would be receiving from its provincial cousins:

> Every province where there's a Tory Premier and some that don't—including Ontario—will send provincial workers to help out with the federal campaign. It's going to be a big difference. Our on-the-ground troops are solid right across the country. (Galloway, 2005)

In return, Prime Minister Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament until October 16 coincided nicely with the timing of the Ontario provincial election, giving MPs and their staff time to work on the Newfoundland and Ontario provincial campaigns (Laghi and Curry, 2007).

Another shared resource is the party professionals themselves. The party's best campaign directors, strategists, communications people and "war room" gurus are used predominantly in the central campaign or the "air war" (Cross, 2004: 122–25). The sharing of this top talent is not new. Dalton Camp, Norm Atkins, Senator Lowell Murray, Nancy McLean, John Lashchinger, David McLaughlin, Patrick Kinsella and Geoff Norquay are a few loyal Conservative professionals who have served on federal and provincial central campaigns (Camp, 1970; Laschinger and Stevens,

1992). These people are indispensable because they have the expertise to run solid, winning campaigns.

As a corollary to sharing political professionals, the 2006 federal election also witnessed three provincial MPPs (two sitting members and one former member) run for federal office. John Baird, Jim Flaherty, and Tony Clement successfully won their seats for the CPC and all three became cabinet members. Peter Van Loan, formally the president of the Ontario PC party, ran in 2006 as well and became the government House leader. There was also an influx of former Queen's Park Conservative staffers who took positions in the new Conservative federal government. "Ottawa *is* Queen's Park," observed one senior Conservative official. Harper and his caucus welcomed the flow of partisan personnel from Ontario's legislative assembly as they brought with them governing expertise, something the CPC sorely lacked (personal interview, January 2007).

Additionally, the party leaders themselves provide campaign assistance. During the tenure of Conservative premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, the federal parties had split on the right and a fine balance was needed to keep conservative support together in Ontario. From 1993 to 2003, loyalties among Ontario Progressive Conservatives were divided between the federal PC party and the Reform party (and still later between the federal PC party and the Canadian Alliance). This presented a challenge to co-operation. Consequently, electoral collaboration across the levels during this tumultuous decade was at its lowest ebb. By 2004, when the Conservative party of Canada emerged from the amalgamation of the PC and Canadian Alliance parties, the leader of the Ontario PC party, John Tory, could openly display his support for the new CPC and its leader Stephen Harper. Co-ordinated electoral efforts occurred in 2004 and 2006, with Tory and many of his MPPs campaigning hard for Stephen Harper and the CPC ("PM might not want," 2004). "He was everywhere," said one advisor in the PMO (personal interview, November 2006). John Tory essentially conducted a mini-tour in Ontario during the 2006 federal election to help Stephen Harper and local CPC candidates. Tory canvassed ridings with federal candidates, attended numerous local announcements to help attract TV coverage of the event, and encouraged his party to campaign aggressively to help elect Conservative candidates to office.

Again, electoral collaboration works both ways. To both thank John Tory for his work in the election and to return the favour of endorsement, Stephen Harper attended a provincial Progressive Conservative convention to "rally the troops" shortly after becoming prime minister. Harper went so far as to introduce John Tory as "the next premier of Ontario" solidifying the close ties between the two parties ("PM's comments," 2006). When the Ontario election writ was dropped sixteen months later, high-profile Conservatives were dispatched to canvass with PC candidates (Galloway, 2007).

Aside from people, these party cousins are also inclined towards electoral co-operation in other ways. For instance, they share software for gathering data. The Constituent Information Management System (CIMS) stores the names and addresses of identified voters, and the information from each provincial and federal election can, if desired, be pooled and scrutinized by strategists to pinpoint core areas of conservative support, or isolate "swing" ridings that could favourable impact the results on election day.[8] Gathering this vital information is usually contracted out to a telemarketing company. In the 2004 and 2006 general elections, the CPC used the Responsive Marketing Group, a Toronto-based firm "with a long history of doing work for the Ontario Progressive Conservatives" (Flanagan, 2007: 86). CIMS itself was based on the Trackright system initially developed by the Ontario PC party.

The parties have also collaborated on the Conservative Campaign University. The "university" is delivered through a video-conferencing system and, while initiated by the CPC in 2006, the content of the curriculum was developed and prepared by party professionals in the Ontario PC party. The campaign university runs every weekend on a sophisticated video-conferencing system that links Conservatives (both federal and provincial) together from across the country. The system engages provincial organizations and is assisting the CPC in its efforts to tighten links with its party affiliates and promote closer electoral co-operation.

In addition to the campaign university, Ontario PC party members and their professional activists have participated in networking conferences with federal Conservatives and other provincial conservative parties across the country. An important gathering was held in Ottawa in February 2008, hosted by the Manning Centre for Democracy. The purpose of these conferences is to forge Conservative connections and share best practices on campaign techniques in order to assist in the election of Conservative governments (Canada Networking Conference, 2008).

Another electoral link, structural in nature, is made through a "liaison" between the federal and provincial Conservative parties in Ontario. Dr. Kellie Leitch, the 2006 Ontario CPC Campaign Chair, was also the federal–provincial liaison between the two caucuses. Once a month, Dr. Leitch visited the Ontario PC caucus to update them on federal campaign preparedness and how provincial members could be of assistance (personal interview, February 2007). Part of the help involved candidate recruitment. While a standing arrangement between the CPC and the Ontario PC prevents the poaching of candidates (also a form of co-operation), provincial MPPs and federal MPs can be asked to identify a potential candidate for the other level. In 2006, for example, Garfield Dunlop (MPP Simcoe North) helped recruit Bruce Stanton who was later elected as the MP for that same riding.

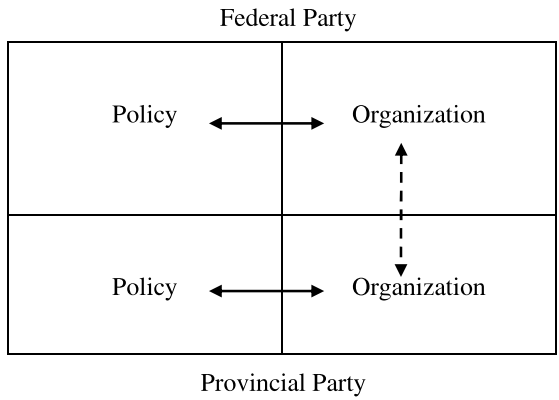
In sum, despite the ten-year interlude when two right-of-centre parties at the federal level complicated electoral co-operation in Ontario, the creation of the CPC has eased tensions and inspired a tighter and more extensive collaboration between itself and the Ontario PC Party. Figure 3 illustrates the type of electoral co-operation that has existed since 2004.

In this case, the policy groups are kept separate and this, again, reflects the importance of safeguarding provincial and federal interests that may often conflict. There is a dotted arrow between the two organization groups because very little of the collaboration is officially formal. While there is undoubtedly a move in that direction, to this point only the agreements on not poaching each other's candidates and the sharing of CIMS software are more formal, collaborative efforts. The work of local activists and the role of the provincial leader in federal campaigns are better described as part of the "co-operative spirit" between the two parties. In spite of the informality of co-operation, each party is finding the other extremely helpful at election time and this goodwill and collaboration may yet become increasingly formal, particularly as the CPC continues to establish itself as the sole party for Conservatives at the federal level.

The Ontario Liberal Party

The core of electoral co-operation between the Ontario Liberal party and the Liberal Party of Canada Ontario (LPCO) rests on Liberal activists. On the ground, "a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal" and most riding associations will encourage their members to campaign for the party engaged

FIGURE 3



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in battle, irrespective of whether the election is occurring on the provincial or federal plane. The support on the ground is very important: both parties count on many of the same people to attend fundraisers, canvass door to door, pound in election signs and work the phones to identify support.

The Liberal parties in Ontario also strongly encourage paid staffers to contribute to the election and they routinely get involved in one another's campaigns (Findlay, 2005). Provincially, the activists who work for the Ontario Liberal leader, MPPs or the party headquarters are directed to put in several hours of phone calling or door-knocking every week. This usually occurs after working hours or on the weekends. On federal election day, everyone is on a full release to pull the vote for the federal party.

It is noteworthy that some party staffers are also seconded to work as full-time organizers. To this end, the provincial and federal Liberals engage in a significant exchange of personnel to help run their campaigns. While this has often occurred in the past, the importance of engaging in this type of co-operation has been solidified since the 2003 provincial campaign.[9] After losing the 1995 and 1999 Ontario elections, the provincial Liberals leaned more heavily on their federal cousins both for strategy and expertise. Recalled one professional activist:

> We relied on a lot on the [federal] teams to work with us. So, for example, many of our tour teams were federal Liberals. I mean, Liberals are Liberals are Liberals, but actually to get staff and get people to come down from Ottawa to Toronto was something we needed to do. (personal interview, June 2006).

In addition to receiving a public endorsement from Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin ("PM might not want," 2004), provincial Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty's central campaign team was composed of people who had spent many years with the federal Liberal party. Warren Kinsella, a long-time aide to Jean Chrétien, was recruited to run the war room. Charlie Angelakos, formerly of the PMO's Ontario desk, handled the provincial leader's tour. Derek Kent, a former press secretary to federal Liberal minister Allan Rock, rode on the media bus to ensure reporters received timely information from the Liberal camp. Gordon Ashworth, a prominent federal and provincial party member, came on board to run the campaign with Don Guy. All of these individuals were working in the private sector when they agreed to take part in the campaign; all were also federal Liberals in one capacity or another. With direction and advice from the federal Liberals, the provincial organization was able to mount a more effective campaign.[10]

After winning in 2003, provincial Liberals gave their full support to the LPCO during the spring 2004 federal election. This was partly fuelled by a desire to establish a permanent and formalized relationship of campaign co-operation. Said one organizer, "we felt that in 2004 we would help them and get them to help us even more in 2007—just continuously, right?" (personal interview, June 2006). The federal party, plagued by an auditor-general's report detailing questionable spending by the government and Quebec wing of the party, was under fire and in need of assistance. One senior Liberal source admitted they were "*significantly* dependent" on the provincial party (personal interview, January 2007). The Ontario Liberals willingly loaned organizers to bolster their cousins' sagging fortunes.[11] Unlike the other parties, this exchange of workers occurred on a more formal basis, with negotiations for the number of people and the roles they would play worked out in advance of the election between the central political organizers of the federal and provincial Liberal parties.[12] According to one provincial organizer, between 25 and 35 paid organizers were committed to the federal Liberal party in Ontario from the outset of the campaign, with that number growing to a staggering 100 by the end of the election.

> We went out and supported, at first, 25 ridings where we put out full-time people. We put out our outreach staff and field workers on the road for them and we adapted what we did in 2003 into their campaign. By the end of the campaign we had 98 people working full time on the federal campaign and on election day there were hundreds because we just cleared out our offices. And [the federal Liberals] knew that and they were extremely happy. (personal interview, June 2006)

Provincial Liberal staffers were co-ordinating volunteers, managing local campaigns, directing regional campaigns in the province and working on the leader's tour. According to one of the federal campaign chairs, there was a "high level of co-operation," and the Liberal staffers on loan from the provincial party "made up something approaching half of our labour at the central and regional level" (personal interview, January 2007).

A similar request was made to the provincial Liberals for the 2006 winter campaign and, again, the Ontario Liberals responded positively. In the early part of the campaign 35 full-time people were placed on loan to the federal party in strategic ridings. Three weeks before election day, more people were sent out to help. Near the end of the election period there were between 100 and 110 full-time people working on the campaign. And again, as in 2004, there was a full release of all remaining Queen's Park Liberal staff on election day to get out the vote for the federal Liberals. Additionally Premier Dalton McGuinty publicly endorsed

Prime Minister Paul Martin and many Liberal MPPs canvassed heavily on behalf of the federal party (Howlett, 2005). In the end, the election was lost to the Conservatives who formed a minority government, but not for lack of co-operation on the Liberal side in Ontario.[13]

Other collaborative efforts focus on technology and infrastructure. Both parties employ the same company to identify Liberal voters during an election. "We work with the same supplier and pool their skills," said one federal operative, implying that the information from this method of contact is often shared (personal interview, January 2007). The parties have also jointly developed a program to manage data derived from their own efforts at voter contact through campaign phone banks. The information is shared between the parties and illustrates a case where the two parties "actually directly looked at [their] needs and did something in the common interest to get elected" (personal interview, January 2007). The two parties also share IT experts during campaigns since "very few [people] actually know anything about IT in a campaign context" (personal interview, January 2007).

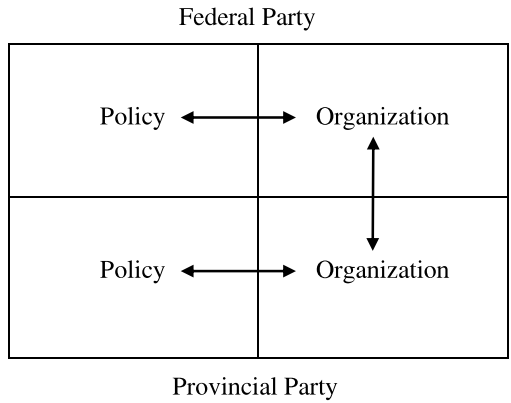
A remaining form of general collaboration between these parties is their infrastructure. The LPCO and the Ontario Liberal Party have been housed together for over fifteen years. The sharing of headquarter space is a formal co-operative arrangement although the staff is distinct. During election campaigns, courtesies are extended. As a federal Liberal official explained:

> What typically happens during elections is that one party staff will vacate in favour of the other [party] because you need an expanded amount of space in an intense period. Some of the [provincial staff] will stick around and work on the federal side and others will vacate and open up their office to someone else who has been brought in for a particular purpose during the election period. (personal interview, January 2007)

All phone lines in party headquarters are made available to the party in need and Liberal staff who work at the legislative assembly will travel to the headquarters to help with the volunteer phone bank.

In sum, and in spite of their organizational separation, the provincial and federal Liberal parties in Ontario are more intertwined than most suspect. In the last four elections (two provincial and two federal) there has been a major collaborative effort between these party cousins. There is a more formal arrangement that involves a major infusion of political professionals and party staffers from one level to the other to help manage local campaigns, direct regional campaigns, work on the leader's tour in the province, run the war room, provide technological services and develop software that will benefit both parties in an election.[14] Electoral collaboration between the Liberal parties in Ontario is represented in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4



The electoral co-operation between Liberal parties in Ontario is a co-ordinated effort. The policy and organization camps have good communication with one another at their respective levels. There is also a clear channel of communication between the groups responsible for campaign organization at each level. This is how they are able to determine the level of "need" for a cousin's campaign: 35 people are given on loan at the beginning of the campaign, for example, with a ramp-up to 100 by the last week or two. Other arrangements are worked out in terms of providing the technical expertise, the endorsement of the federal leader and the relocation of party staff at the headquarters to provide enough room for the party-in-battle to wage a solid effort. This collaboration is a deliberate effort to put each other in the seat of power.

At the same time, the diagram reveals no connection between the policy groups. Both the Ontario PC party and the OLP jealously guard their prerogatives on policy. As illustrated by Liberals' provincial health premium prior to the 2004 federal election and the fiscal gap campaign prior to the 2006 campaign, policy priorities can diverge from the interests of their federal cousins.[15] This has not, however, dampened electoral collaboration. Loyalty to the party label has ensured that campaign co-operation continues in spite of these disagreements.

Conclusion

By examining how parties fight elections, it is clear that campaign co-operation between parties with identical partisan complexions is not unusual in this province and there is good reason to expect—and to explore for—similar co-operative efforts in other provinces. Notably,

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barriers to collaboration do exist. Personality conflicts between leaders can hamper co-operative efforts (Black, 1965: 134; Simpson, 1988: 341; Whitaker, 1977:309–28), as can diverging federal and provincial interests (Smith, 1975; Whitaker, 1977: 265). The 2006 confrontation between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams over equalization funding and offshore resource revenues is a glaring example of both a personality and policy clash (LeBlanc, 2006: October 16). Moreover, when federal and provincial elections occur in close proximity, campaign fatigue can also hinder electoral collaboration. Lastly, party splits at the federal level complicated co-operation for Conservatives in Ontario from 1993–2003. Party professionals within the Ontario PC party cautioned against formal co-operation with either the federal PC party or the Reform party in order to avoid angering their own members with divided loyalties in Ottawa.

Intriguingly, and in spite of the barriers that can occasionally give pause to collaboration across the levels, party activists are strongly committed to their party and willingly share resources to the electoral advantage of their partisan counterpart. They want each other to *win*. In fact, electoral collaboration has the effect of forging unity between these party organizations. This shrinks the space between partisan affiliates and directly challenges the notion that Canada's federal system has led to increasingly disentangled political parties.

When this type of co-operation in a province is close, more questions arise. For example, if elections can bond party organizations and their activists, what effect does this have if the parties should each become the government at their respective level? Does shared partisanship, which integrates party cousins on the electoral battlefield, carry over on a government-to-government basis? These queries deserve serious consideration. If party cousins lean on each other's campaign "machines" to get elected, and if this has the effect of forging unity between them, the role of partisanship cannot be discounted as a factor that could affect the conduct of intergovernmental relations. New research can examine the roles that party activists take on *within* government at each level and whether or not their pre-existing relationships can be used to better manage issues *between* governments. Academics and political observers have acknowledged that a modern use of patronage is to bring the political professionals into positions of power when a party wins government (Kinsella, 2007: 25; Noel, 2007: 206). Furthermore, people in these positions have a growing influence over the development and direction of public policy (Savoie, 1999: 98–104). The partisan dimension of federal–provincial relations has long been a neglected aspect of federalism studies (Young and Leuprecht, 2006: 17). This paper has demonstrated that perhaps there is good reason to return to just such an investigation.

Notes

1 For a full discussion of campaign co-operation in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, see Esselment (2009).
2 Party professionals are people who work in politics full time and are usually, but not always, employed either by the party directly (such as an executive director) or by the party leaders in Parliament or provincial legislatures. A party professional will often be extensively involved in the planning and execution of a party's central campaign and, afterwards, may accept a job as a senior advisor to the leader or as a senior staffer for a minister. For a good discussion of party professionals, see Webb and Kolodny (2006). Along with the term "party professional," this paper will use "political professional" and "elite activist" interchangeably.
3 Policy groups may work together (or be composed of the same people) in provinces where the party is officially integrated (the Liberal party in the Maritimes, for example). In these cases, the diagram would have a solid line connecting the two groups.
4 In the interest of space, this paper will not delve into campaign co-ordination within the NDP. Suffice it say that by virtue of its integrated structure, the federal and provincial wings of the New Democratic party engage in intense electoral collaboration and this varies little from province to province, Quebec excepted (Wells, 2006: 193; Whitehorn, 2004: 106–138).
5 Campaign financing legislation has little impact on electoral co-operation between parties. In Ontario, for example, parties do not share donor lists and their finances are kept strictly separate. Those staffers who are on loan to a party cousin to help with the election are paid by local campaigns and their "value" is declared to Elections Canada or Elections Ontario in order to conform to legal spending limits.
6 This is facilitated by constituency boundary overlap in Ontario. Ridings are replicated at the federal and provincial level and so volunteers canvass the same neighbourhoods and talk to the same people whether the campaign is for the provincial or federal party. While riding symmetry can encourage collaboration, it by no means renders the Ontario case unique (Esselment, 2009).
7 Staffers can include those people who work for the party directly, in the legislature for Conservative members and paid organizers in the field.
8 Voter identification can be conducted by the central campaign but more often it is carried out by the constituencies. The decision to share this information with a federal or provincial riding counterpart is often taken at the local level.
9 As one example, both Scott Reid and Karl Littler took a leave of absence from their jobs in the office of the Minister of Finance in Ottawa to work on the 1995 provincial campaign. In 1999, when federal and provincial riding boundaries first coincided, the provincial Liberals used federal riding phone lists and sign locations and a number of workers on the campaign were on loan from the staffs of federal MPs (see: Coutts, 1999).
10 After the provincial Liberal win in 2003 there was a shift of party professionals from the federal to provincial government (Esselment, 2009, 257–63). This made sense since those closely associated with outgoing Prime Minister Jean Chrétien would not have influential roles with the new federal Liberal leader, Paul Martin. Other opportunities could be found in Dalton McGuinty's new government.
11 One provincial organizer admitted they also felt guilty. The provincial budget, announced only weeks before the federal writ was dropped, contained a "health premium" that made a number of Ontarians angry. With careful timing, the provincial Liberal party paid $100,000 at the beginning of June to run radio ads outlining the benefits of the new health premium, emphasizing that the new funding would pay for "more cancer care, heart operations and hip and knee replacements" (Mackie, 2004).

The federal election was held June 28, thereby giving the provincial Liberals a chance to polish the tarnished Liberal label for the benefit of their federal cousins.

12 The negotiations were more "formal" in the sense that the provincial Liberals wished to maximize their efforts on behalf of the federal party, but they also had a government to run. Removing the experienced political staff from their jobs could not be done ad hoc.

13 The CPC won 124 seats, the Liberal Party 103, Bloc Québécois 51, and NDP 29. There was also one independent. In Ontario, the Liberals won 54 seats and the CPC 40 (in 2004 the Liberals won 75 seats to the Tories' 24).

14 Aside from the 2003 provincial election, the federal party appears to be the greater beneficiary of this campaign co-operation. This can be attributed to the "weaker sister" phenomenon where it is not unusual for one of the two organizations to be stronger than the other for numerous reasons, such as holding power, having a stronger leaders, and so forth. This phenomenon has a cyclical pattern, so the weaker sister in one election may become the stronger in another. This is why party elites covet collaboration: if their party loses strength, reliance can be placed on their partisan affiliate for campaign assistance.

15 The "Fairness" campaign was launched by the Ontario government in 2005. The basic thrust of the argument was that Ontario taxpayers put more money into federal government coffers than they received back in federal services. Federal Liberals were unhappy their provincial cousins were agitating about the issue so close to a possible election call. According to officials on both sides, the "fiscal gap" problem was resolved before the 2006 general election (see Government of Ontario, 2005).

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