Political Attitudes and Behaviour in a Non-Partisan Environment: Toronto 2014

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Ten years ago, Cutler and Matthews (2005, 359) lamented that "municipal elections are the poor cousins in the study of elections and voting behaviour." Since then, however, little has changed to alter the veracity of their claim. National election studies are regularly conducted in countries around the world (for example, Germany, Sweden, New Zealand, Denmark, France, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Norway, Hungary, the Netherlands, Belgium and Australia), and the study of subnational elections has become increasingly popular (see the Making Electoral Democracy Work project, Blais, 2010, and the Comparative Provincial Elections Project). Nevertheless, little work has been done to study voters at the municipal level in Canada, particularly using individual-level data.

For many reasons, the scarcity of research on municipal elections is surprising. In terms of frequency and sheer volume, most elections in Canada are, in fact, fought at the local, or municipal, level. Indeed, municipalities account for 99.6 per cent of all governments, and 95.8 per cent of all politicians in Canada (even excluding school boards and other special purpose bodies).[1] Moreover, municipal governments in Canada are tasked with making decisions about a wide range of policies and services

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that directly affect voters' daily lives. For instance, most of the infrastructure and services that Canadians take for granted, such as water and sewage, garbage removal, roads, fire and police service, are provided and paid for by municipal governments. Municipal governments are also responsible for public transit, which is of significant importance in a large city such as Toronto. Data collected during the 2014 Toronto municipal election suggest that Torontonians view their local government as highly influential. The Toronto Election Study (a dataset we draw upon here and which is discussed in greater detail below) asked voters to rank the three orders of government in terms of the amount of impact each government had upon the quality of their lives. Municipal government was ranked as having the greatest impact of any level of government by 30.1 per cent of respondents, while a further 20.5 per cent ranked it second.[2] Given that voters themselves seem to perceive municipal governments as important, it stands to reason that the study of municipal elections should be of importance to researchers. Furthermore, municipal elections, especially in Canada, are typically low-information and non-partisan contests.[3] These are two interesting variations from elections at the federal or provincial level, and are thus important to consider when evaluating the generalizability of voting models.

In this paper we concentrate on improving our understanding of voting behaviour at the municipal level in Canada. Existing research has delved into the determinants of candidate success (see Kushner et al., 1997; Siegel et al., 2001; Stanwick, 2000), including female candidates in particular (Tolley, 2011), as well as the determinants of voter turnout at the municipal level (Dostie-Goulet et al., 2012; McGregor and Spicer, 2016). Most of these studies, however, are based upon aggregate data (meaning that it is difficult to draw inferences about individual voters), and none of the authors addressed the determinants of vote choice at the municipal level. Cutler and Matthews' study (2005) of the 2002 Vancouver election is the only study of vote choice in a Canadian municipal election using individual-level data. Despite the importance of this pioneering study, Vancouver is one of a small minority of municipal jurisdictions in Canada where parties contest elections; non-partisan contests are the norm in most other Canadian provinces (except Quebec). Furthermore, a single case should not define a field of inquiry without corroborating evidence. Therefore there is considerable room for additional research, in terms of replication and/or extension, on individual-level vote choice in Canadian municipal elections, especially non-partisan ones.

The objective of this paper is to build upon the work of Cutler and Matthews by studying another municipal election, while at the same time extending the literature to consider one that was not contested by parties and considering the implications of such a difference. In the spirit of replication, our principal research objective is to evaluate whether a standard approach to understanding vote choice at the national and provincial levels is

Abstract. Voting behaviour in municipal elections is understudied in Canada. Existing research is limited by the type of data (aggregate instead of individual-level) and the cases evaluated (partisan when most contests are non-partisan). The objective of this study is to contribute to this literature by using individual-level data about a non-partisan election. To do so, we use data from the Toronto Election Study, conducted during the 2014 election. Our research goals are to evaluate whether a standard approach to understanding vote choice (the multi-stage explanatory model) is applicable in a non-partisan, municipal-level contest, and to determine the correlates of vote choice in the 2014 Toronto mayoral election in particular. Our analysis reveals that, although it was a formally non-partisan contest, voters tended to view the mayoral candidates in both ideological and partisan terms. We also find that a standard vote choice model provides valuable insight into voter preferences at the municipal level.

Résumé. Le comportement électoral dans les élections municipales est peu étudié au Canada. La recherche existante est limitée par le type de données (agrégées plutôt que recueillies au niveau individuel) et les cas évalués (à caractère partisan, à la différence de la plupart des courses électorales non partisanes). Cette étude a pour objet de contribuer à la littérature sur le sujet en utilisant des données au niveau individuel à propos d'une élection non partisane. Pour ce faire, nous utilisons les données provenant de l'étude électorale (*Toronto Election Study, TES*) menée pendant l'élection de 2014. Nos objectifs de recherche visent à évaluer si une approche normalisée permettant de comprendre le choix de vote (le modèle explicatif en plusieurs étapes) est applicable dans une course non partisane au niveau municipal et à déterminer les corrélats de l'élection à la mairie de Toronto de 2014 en particulier. Notre analyse révèle que, bien que s'agissant à titre officiel d'une course électorale non partisane, les électeurs avaient tendance à considérer les candidats au poste de maire sous l'angle aussi bien idéologique que partisan. Nous constatons également qu'un modèle de choix de vote normalisé fournit de précieuses indications sur les préférences de l'électeur au niveau municipal.

applicable to municipal-level contests and in so doing determine the correlates of vote choice in the 2014 Toronto Mayoral election. To accomplish these aims, we use data from the Toronto Election Study (TES), a large-N survey of voters conducted before and after the 2014 Toronto municipal election. In most studies of voting behaviour, preferences are assumed to come from sociological predispositions, ideological affinities or specific issue considerations. Indeed, Cutler and Matthews found evidence that these factors matter in their study of Vancouver. We investigate whether a similar structure exists when parties are not organizing the competition at the municipal level. First, and most importantly, we consider the extent to which the Toronto election was actually a non-partisan contest. Did voters understand mayoral candidates in ideological or partisan terms? We find, perhaps surprisingly, that voters had a strong tendency to associate mayoral candidates with particular ideologies and political parties. Armed with this knowledge, we proceed to evaluate voting behaviour with a typical vote choice model, and consider the explanatory power of the exercise. We find that a multi-stage model (see Blais et al., 2002; Gidengil et al., 2006, 2012; Miller and Shanks, 1996; Nevitte et al., 2000) provides valuable

insight into voter preferences, similar to how it operates at other levels of government. We conclude that standard vote choice models are appropriate for use at the municipal level and that context-specific features, such as the candidates running and the profile of the election, are also relevant.

Understanding Voting Behaviour at the Municipal Level

It is well established that parties have a significant impact upon the way that citizens view and participate in the political process. According to Dalton (2002: 125, 126), political parties "define the choices available to voters" and "shape the content of election campaigns." Parties also provide the institutional resources for candidates to successfully appeal to voters, in the form of a "brand name" and economies of scale in campaign efforts (Aldrich, 1995). Indeed, how voters relate to parties is a central component of our understanding of voting behaviour. Many voters form a long-standing, psychological attachment to parties, known as "partisanship." Although the development of partisanship is contested—on the one hand, some argue that voters are socialized into partisanship (Campbell et al., 1960); on the other, partisanship results from a "running tally" of party evaluations (Fiorina, 1981)—the effects of partisanship are not disputed. Partisanship has been shown to influence not only voting behaviour (for a Canadian example, see Gidengil et al., 2012), but also the manner in which voters receive and process information (Campbell et al., 1960; Zaller, 1992). Partisanship can colour how citizens evaluate past government performance (Duch et al., 2000) and is related to political engagement, interest and attentiveness (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948; Buchanan, 1977). Indeed, the majority of research on voting behaviour makes use of voter predispositions toward parties for understanding how citizens behave politically. Partisanship can act as an "anchor," providing a default preference over candidates, issues and policy positions.

For the most part, however, political parties do not contest municipal elections in Canada, and such is the case in Toronto. Without parties, how do voters make sense of the election? Two points are relevant. First, even without party labels, the stances of politicians can often inform voters of their ideological positions. The logic of the spatial voting model (Downs, 1957) predicts that, when ideological positions are known, voters will prefer parties or candidates that are closer to them in ideological space. This is relevant for considerations of stated positions, in terms of left and right, but also in terms of sociodemographic characteristics which may make the interests of a voter more likely to lie on the left (more generous social spending, for example) or right (less government intervention in the economy) of the spectrum. Second, short-term factors rooted in the context of the specific election can also be important. Many voting models, from the Michigan model (Campbell et al., 1960) to the bloc recursive model (Blais et al., 2002),

consider how more immediate considerations, such as the economy, issues and candidates, may sway a voter. In a non-partisan contest, then, it is still likely that vote choice can be understood by appealing to ideological considerations and issue preferences.

An important caveat to the above discussion is that it assumes that voters understand non-partisan municipal contests in ideological terms, simply without party labels and "teams." This is an untested assumption. Do voters in municipal elections understand mayoral candidates in terms of their general ideologies? If not, it makes little sense to expect voters to be drawn to the candidates closest to them ideologically. We evaluate this assumption below. We also examine whether standard voting considerations, such as the economy, satisfaction with the incumbent, and issues, are relevant factors in municipal vote choice.

In so doing, this paper expands upon the work of Cutler and Matthews (2005). In the partisan Vancouver context, they found evidence that voter ideology and partisanship influenced mayoral vote choice. They also found economic considerations and social group membership to be important to some degree (among students and voters of non-European ethnicity). But for one exception—whether voters held the government responsible for problems in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside—the authors found that issues had little effect on vote choice, despite the apparent salience of issues like transit or taxes and services.

A limitation of Cutler and Matthews' study, acknowledged by the authors themselves, is that it is based on data from a partisan election and therefore lacks generalizability to most of Canada's other municipalities. We recognize that the case of Toronto is also unique. The 2014 mayoral contest was extremely high profile in nature and therefore unlikely to be as low information as many municipal contests, and two of the mayoral candidates had formal partisan ties in the past (Chow with the federal NDP and Tory with the provincial Progressive Conservatives). Although officially non-partisan, it is an open question whether partisanship structured vote preferences for Torontonians. Our study therefore enables us to consider how variation in the level of partisanization[4] of an election affects the utility of standard vote models for municipal contests. We believe that this study represents a noteworthy contribution to the study of municipal elections in Canada, and a step toward understanding the generalizability of vote choice models. Before moving on to consider whether Torontonians understood the election in partisan terms, and identifying the correlates of vote choice in the election, we present some important contextual details of the mayoral contest.

Toronto 2014

The 2014 Toronto mayoral election was remarkable for a number of reasons. It was the first election in the city's history to receive significant

international media attention, largely due to fascination with the incumbent mayor, Rob Ford, whose chronic substance abuse and associated problems brought widespread attention to the city's politics. Rob Ford's revelation that he had cancer, and the last minute decision to have his brother Doug replace him on the mayoral ballot, only added to the continuing circus that was Rob Ford's tenure as mayor. In essence, Doug entered the race for mayor as the pseudo-incumbent, as most voters perceived him and his brother as interchangeable; Toronto Election Study data suggest that only 3.4 per cent of respondents felt that brothers' platforms were either mostly or all different.

The election did not focus solely on the Ford brothers, however. Two high profile candidates also joined the race for mayor, eventually forcing other early and locally prominent candidates from the race. Olivia Chow was the first of the prominent candidates to officially declare her candidacy. Chow was a former city councillor and, at the time, was a member of the Canadian Parliament, sitting as an NDP MP. She was also the widow of the much-respected former leader of the federal NDP party, Jack Layton. The second high profile candidate to enter was John Tory, who had run unsuccessfully for mayor in 2003. Following that failure, he was chosen as the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative (PC) Party, only to step down after failing to achieve success in either the 2007 provincial election or a by-election in 2009. Aside from his past political experience, Tory also served as the CEO of one of Canada's largest telecommunication firms, Rogers Communications, and, until he announced his candidacy for mayor, hosted a radio talk show in Toronto.

On October 27, Tory carried the day, winning 40.3 per cent of the popular vote. Doug Ford was second, with the support of 33.7 per cent of voters, while Olivia Chow came in third, with 23.2 per cent of the vote (City of Toronto, 2014). If the turnout rate of 54.9 per cent is any indication, the election galvanized and motivated the public to get involved. Turnout in 2014 was significantly higher than in any election since the 1997 amalgamation;[5] it was also higher than the most recent Ontario provincial election. Unlike many municipal elections, this one clearly captured the interest and attention of voters.

Despite the fact that Rob Ford was no longer running for mayor, assessment of his time as mayor remained a dominant issue in the media because of Doug Ford's close association with his brother. Though the election did not, strictly speaking, include an incumbent candidate, retrospective considerations were likely among a public that viewed Doug as a proxy for, or at least very similar to, his brother. Beyond retrospective evaluations of the Fords, a number of key issues dominated the election. Transit was and continues to be a very salient issue in Toronto. In the 2010 election, Rob Ford had promised to scrap a light rail transit (LRT) system, championed by the city's former mayor David Miller, and build more subways

throughout the city. Soon after being elected in 2010, Ford moved forward with his plan, scrapping his predecessor's ambitious LRT proposal in favour of a single subway line. However, after initially supporting Ford, Toronto City Council overturned its decision and came up with its own compromise solution to address transit needs. During the 2014 campaign polls conducted by newspapers consistently placed transit at or near the top of most important issues in the election (Church, 2014; Ipsos Reid, 2014; Nanos, 2014; *Toronto Star*, 2014a, 2014b). Doug Ford stuck to his brother's promise for more subways, while Olivia Chow supported city council's compromise and John Tory introduced plans for his "SmartTrack" commuter rail system.

Along with transit, residents identified other important issues during the campaign. Many polls identified outgoing mayor Rob Ford as the biggest "issue" next to transit. Whether to increase taxes[6] at, below, or above inflation, along with concerns about the city's finances, were also important issues, particularly as Doug Ford sought to build on his brother's purported success in managing the city's finances and keeping taxes low. As a corollary of the transit debate, residents and candidates also identified the issue of traffic and congestion as a major concern in the city, with both Ford and Tory promising to protect drivers' interests in the city.

Data

The analyses below draw primarily upon data from the Toronto Election Study (TES). The TES is a two-wave internet survey of Torontonians that was conducted around the time of the Oct. 27 election. Three thousand respondents were interviewed in the weeks before election day (after the candidate nomination deadline of September 12). Nearly 75 per cent of those respondents also completed the post-election wave of the survey, which was administered in the week after the election.[7] The TES includes a variety of questions about attitudes and behaviour, similar to those contained in many national or provincial election studies and is the first dataset of its kind that allows for a thorough consideration of voting behaviour in a non-partisan Canadian municipality.[8] In order to maximize the generalizability of our findings, all results discussed below are weighted for age, gender and education.[9]

Ideological and Partisan Perceptions in a non-partisan election

As noted above, the spatial vote choice model expects that voters will prefer candidates who are closest to them ideologically. In most elections, this coincides with party preferences but, as previously mentioned, Toronto does

not have partisan mayoral contests. Therefore, we need to understand how voters viewed the candidates before we can assess whether a standard vote model is relevant. To begin our analysis, then, we assess the degree to which voters differentiate the candidates in terms of their ideological positions, and compare that to recent federal and provincial elections to see if the non-partisan nature of the election was relevant for perceiving the ideology of the candidates.

For the Toronto data, we draw on a question from the TES that asks respondents to position the three major candidates on a scale from 0 (left) to 10 (right). Federal estimates are taken from Canadian Election Study data from 2011 (Fournier et al., 2011), while for provincial estimates we draw upon data from the 2011 Ontario election collected by the Making Electoral Democracy Work project (Blais, 2010). Table 1 includes the results of this analysis, and shows the mean and standard deviation values for the perceived ideology of the Toronto mayoral candidates and the federal and provincial parties.

The first striking observation from Table 1 is that Torontonians clearly differentiated between the mayoral candidates in terms of ideology. Chow was perceived as being on the left, while both Tory and Ford were both placed on the right. Importantly, Ford was seen to be to the right of Tory (this difference, and all other differences between candidates and parties in Table 1, is statistically significant at $p < 0.01$).

The ideological placements of two of the mayoral candidates were, in fact, quite similar to those of two of the parties at the federal and provincial levels. Estimates of Ford's ideology were similar to those of the provincial Progressive Conservative and federal Conservative parties: all had values above 7. On the other side of the spectrum, Chow was clearly closest to the NDP, both provincially and federally.[10] John Tory was the sole outlier. Respondents placed him at 6.53 on the scale, closer to the federal Conservative and provincial PC parties than the centrist Liberals but further from the right-wing parties than Ford. Tory's tenure as the leader

Table 1
Perceived Candidate and Party Ideology

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Toronto (N = 2033)	Chow	2.96	2.58
	Tory	6.53	2.17
	Ford	7.38	2.72
Ontario (N = 1337)	NDP	3.41	2.06
	Liberal	5.02	1.98
	Progressive Conservative	7.19	2.52
Canada (N = 1025)	NDP	3.06	2.22
	Liberal	4.60	2.18
	Conservative	7.03	2.39

of the provincial Progressive Conservative party may account in part for this placement.

There are thus two primary conclusions from Table 1. First, even in the absence of parties, voters clearly differentiated between the ideologies of the candidates; Chow, Tory and Ford were seen as ideologically distinct from one another, and the range of perceived ideologies was roughly the same as at the federal and provincial levels. Second, ideologically at least, Chow and Ford were perceived as the NDP and (Progressive) Conservative candidates, respectively, while Tory was perceived as more Conservative than Liberal, at least on a unidimensional ideological scale.

Were these ideological perceptions accompanied by corresponding partisan associations? Although the election was officially non-partisan, some of the candidates had party ties and many voters associated the candidates with parties. Table 2 shows the responses to the following TES question: Which political party, if any, would you associate with (Doug Ford/Olivia Chow/John Tory)?

The results of Table 2 reveal an intriguing association with the ideological observations in Table 1. Most voters (68.5%) associated Chow with the NDP, which is unsurprising given her past ties with the party but also because she had a similar ideological placement to both the provincial and federal parties in Table 1. The Conservative party was the modal response for both of the other candidates, though fewer people (46.2%) associated Ford with the party than Tory (55.5%) (likely due to Tory's former affiliation with the provincial PCs). Few voters associated any of the candidates with the Liberal party, though Tory was perceived as a Liberal by more respondents than Ford.

On the whole, therefore, ideological placements line up well with partisan perceptions.[11] It appears that many voters understood the 2014 Toronto Election in much the same way as any other partisan contest. The left-wing candidate was associated with the leftist NDP, and the right-wing candidates were associated with the right-leaning Conservatives. Despite the absence of

TABLE 2
Perceived Candidate Party Ties

	Olivia Chow	Doug Ford	John Tory
None	5.6%	14.7%	6.8%
Conservative	2.4%	46.2%	55.8%
Liberal	4.8%	10.1%	15.5%
NDP	68.5%	2.0%	1.2%
Green	3.2%	1.8%	1.7%
Other	0.6%	1.9%	0.9%
Don't know	14.9%	23.3%	18.2%

N = 2850

a formal partisan cue, most voters saw the election in partisan terms, although partisan perceptions were not uniform. Only a minority of respondents associated Ford with the Conservative Party, and almost 40 per cent did not associate him with any party (answering "none" or "don't know"). Even Olivia Chow, who resigned as an NDP MP in early 2014 in order to run in the mayoral contest, was only associated with the NDP by fewer than 70 per cent of voters; more than 1 in 5 respondents assigned no partisan affiliation. While there were clear patterns to partisan perceptions, party information was uneven, and in some cases, nonexistent.

Explaining vote choice in the 2014 Toronto Municipal Election

Of course, explaining vote choice is a much more complex process than unidimensional measures of ideology or perceived links to parties might indicate. We turn now to examine the applicability of a more complex model of vote choice to the 2014 Toronto Municipal Election. Specifically, we consider several "blocs" of factors, some of which contribute to ideological positions and some of which reflect short-term considerations. This approach is similar to the multi-stage models (drawing on the work of Miller and Shanks, 1996) that have been used to explain vote choice in federal elections (see Blais et al., 2002; Gidengil et al., 2006, 2012; Nevitte et al., 2000), as well as Cutler and Matthews's study of Vancouver.[12]

Our analysis focuses on five specific types of variables: sociodemographic characteristics, ideology, partisanship, retrospective evaluations of incumbent performance and issues. The sociodemographics we include are standard, namely gender, age, income, education level, ethnicity, religion and geography (downtown Toronto versus the suburbs—Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough).[13] We also expand the list to include two variables which we expect may be of particular importance in the 2014 Toronto municipal election. First, we incorporate a measure of home ownership, a variable that has been found to have implications for municipal elections (Fischel, 2001; McGregor and Spicer, 2016). Next, we introduce a measure of sexual orientation. The outgoing mayor, Rob Ford, famously avoided attending events surrounding Pride week in Toronto, and this may have impacted the vote choices of sexual minorities (Dale, 2014; Gee, 2012; Rider, 2011). Although these variables are not strictly comparable to other studies, they are important for understanding the overall contribution of sociodemographic factors to vote choice in Toronto in 2014.

We account for ideology with indicators that address two dimensions of the concept: social and economic conservatism. Though these measures are related to one another,[14] they nevertheless represent two distinct dimensions of political competition. Indices were created for each dimension from a battery of TES questions (details can be found in Appendix I).

Although the election was technically non-partisan in nature, we also include a series of partisanship dummies (Conservative, Green, Liberal, NDP) in our analysis. As established above, many voters associated the mayoral candidates with parties, and such associations may have coloured voting behaviour. Partisanship variables are also standard in studies of other electoral contests in Canada and were found to be relevant in Vancouver by Cutler and Matthews (2005). The degree to which partisanship matters for vote choice is an important indicator of the partisanization of this specific election. It is possible that, because parties were not structuring the competition, partisanship itself was less of a factor than usually found in voting studies.

We also consider two types of short-term measures that have been found relevant in other studies: evaluations of the performance of the previous government and issues. Retrospective evaluations include an evaluation of the city's economy and a measure of satisfaction with the current mayor. For issues, we include attitudes towards four major campaign issues: public transit, municipal taxes, traffic and congestion, and the finances of the municipal government. Many of these issues cannot be clearly placed on a left-right continuum, so we use measures of perceived issue importance. Following from the idea of issue ownership, this will allow us to understand whether any particular candidate was seen as having the best proposal for an issue. We recognize, however, that this operationalization may underestimate the importance of issues, as individuals who prioritized an issue may have disagreed on the appropriate policy direction.

If voters approach their vote decision in municipal contests in the same way as other elections, then we expect that the model we have constructed will have considerable explanatory power, with many of the variables displaying relationships with vote choice. Note that we do not include evaluations of the candidates as is common practice in the study of partisan elections in Canada. In Canada's Westminster system of government, vote choices ultimately result in the choice of a governing party and, as evaluations of candidates and party leaders are distinct from (though undoubtedly related to) evaluations of party, it makes sense to include measures of candidate and leader ratings in explanatory models of such elections. At the municipal level, however, the choice of mayoral candidate leads directly to the election of a candidate. In such a setting, the link between candidate rating and vote choice is tautological, and the inclusion of candidate variables in an explanatory model provides no theoretical benefit.[15]

In Tables 3–5 we present the results from a series of multinomial logistic regression models, where the dependent variable is vote choice. Entries report average marginal effects (calculated while leaving values of other variables unchanged), which can be interpreted as the effect of each independent variable upon the likelihood of supporting each candidate, as opposed to the other two candidates.[16] All variables are coded from 0 to 1, meaning that entries can be interpreted as the effect of each

TABLE 3
Olivia Chow vs. Other Vote

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Female	0.056 (0.024)**	0.013 (0.024)	0.001 (0.024)	−0.001 (0.023)	0.010 (0.023)
Age	−0.164 (0.064)**	−0.159 (0.058)***	−0.160 (0.057)***	−0.181 (0.057)***	−0.167 (0.056)***
Income	−0.171 (0.040)***	−0.133 (0.041)***	−0.133 (0.041)***	−0.125 (0.039)***	−0.114 (0.039)***
University Educated	0.065 (0.024)***	0.054 (0.024)**	0.059 (0.023)**	0.050 (0.023)**	0.040 (0.023)*
Visible Minority	0.040 (0.028)	0.048 (0.027)*	0.038 (0.027)**	0.045 (0.027)*	0.049 (0.026)*
Catholic	−0.012 (0.031)	−0.034 (0.031)	−0.036 (0.031)	−0.034 (0.030)	−0.023 (0.030)
Atheist	0.114 (0.026)***	0.094 (0.026)***	0.087 (0.025)***	0.068 (0.025)**	0.067 (0.024)***
Home Owner	−0.053 (0.027)*	−0.036 (0.026)	−0.023 (0.026)	−0.022 (0.026)	−0.003 (0.027)
Sexual Minority	0.082 (0.039)**	0.063 (0.042)	0.054 (0.043)	0.038 (0.041)	0.040 (0.041)
Toronto	0.087 (0.025)***	0.080 (0.025)***	0.065 (0.025)***	0.058 (0.025)**	0.041 (0.025)
Social Conservatism		−0.211 (0.065)***	−0.190 (0.063)***	−0.186 (0.061)***	−0.139 (0.063)**
Economic Conservatism		−0.510 (0.067)***	−0.430 (0.065)***	−0.405 (0.064)***	−0.411 (0.067)***
Liberal Partisan			−0.026 (0.026)	−0.021 (0.026)	−0.024 (0.026)
Conservative Partisan			−0.124 (0.041)***	−0.104 (0.040)**	−0.090 (0.039)**
NDP Partisan			0.123 (0.034)***	0.109 (0.033)***	0.100 (0.033)***
Green Partisan			−0.076 (0.082)	−0.109 (0.082)	−0.113 (0.077)
Economic Evaluation				−0.105 (0.034)***	−0.106 (0.033)***
Mayoral Satisfaction				−0.059 (0.022)***	−0.054 (0.022)**
Public Transit					0.141 (0.055)**
Taxes					−0.079 (0.044)*
Traffic and Congestion					−0.116 (0.067)*
Municipal Finances					−0.161 (0.061)**
N	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465
Pseudo R-Squared	0.0797	0.1359	0.1591	0.1955	0.2197

Entries report marginal effects and standard errors (in parentheses)
*: $p < 0.10$, **: $p < 0.05$, ***: $p < 0.01$

TABLE 4
Doug Ford vs. Other Vote

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Female	−0.080 (0.028)***	−0.050 (0.028)*	−0.049 (0.028)*	−0.033 (0.028)	−0.043 (0.027)
Age	−0.121 (0.073)*	−0.134 (0.074)*	−0.128 (0.073)*	−0.075 (0.073)	−0.133 (0.072)*
Income	−0.080 (0.052)	−0.078 (0.052)	−0.074 (0.053)	−0.097 (0.051)*	−0.105 (0.050)**
University Educated	−0.085 (0.030)***	−0.069 (0.030)**	−0.065 (0.030)**	−0.059 (0.028)**	−0.042 (0.028)
Visible Minority	0.061 (0.033)*	0.051 (0.033)	0.059 (0.032)*	0.044 (0.031)	0.046 (0.032)
Catholic	0.054 (0.033)	0.053 (0.033)	0.054 (0.033)*	0.059 (0.032)*	0.051 (0.031)
Atheist	−0.115 (0.039)***	−0.094 (0.039)**	−0.092 (0.039)**	−0.061 (0.038)	−0.060 (0.037)
Home Owner	−0.030 (0.035)	−0.030 (0.035)	−0.030 (0.035)	−0.026 (0.034)	−0.043 (0.032)
Sexual Minority	−0.082 (0.062)	−0.064 (0.066)	−0.052 (0.065)	−0.010 (0.061)	−0.014 (0.060)
Toronto	−0.143 (0.036)	−0.116 (0.038)***	−0.116 (0.037)***	−0.099 (0.036)***	−0.079 (0.033)**
Social Conservatism		0.484 (0.070)***	0.440 (0.073)***	0.441 (0.073)***	0.410 (0.071)***
Economic Conservatism		0.104 (0.076)	0.072 (0.078)	0.043 (0.077)	0.030 (0.075)
Liberal Partisan			−0.077 (0.037)**	−0.083 (0.036)**	−0.073 (0.035)**
Conservative Partisan			0.048 (0.037)	0.020 (0.036)	0.011 (0.035)
NDP Partisan			0.052 (0.054)	0.070 (0.055)	0.066 (0.053)
Green Partisan			−0.043 (0.120)	0.015 (0.114)	0.043 (0.099)
Economic Evaluation				0.220 (0.040)***	0.220 (0.038)***
Mayoral Satisfaction				0.123 (0.017)***	0.114 (0.017)***
Public Transit					−0.213 (0.056)***
Taxes					−0.011 (0.023)
Traffic and Congestion					0.021 (0.089)
Municipal Finances					0.379 (0.096)***
N	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465
Pseudo R-Squared	0.0797	0.1359	0.1591	0.1955	0.2197

Entries report marginal effects and standard errors (in parentheses)
*: $p < 0.10$, **: $p < 0.05$, ***: $p < 0.01$

TABLE 5
John Tory vs. Other Vote

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Female	0.024 (0.030)	0.038 (0.029)	0.048 (0.029)	−0.033 (0.029)	0.032 (0.029)
Age	0.285 (0.078)***	0.293 (0.076)***	0.287 (0.074)***	0.256 (0.073)***	0.302 (0.074)***
Income	0.251 (0.052)***	0.211 (0.053)***	0.206 (0.052)***	0.222 (0.052)***	0.218 (0.051)***
University Educated	0.020 (0.031)	0.015 (0.030)	0.006 (0.030)	0.009 (0.030)	0.003 (0.030)
Visible Minority	−0.101 (0.035)***	−0.098 (0.035)***	−0.097 (0.035)***	−0.090 (0.034)***	−0.095 (0.034)***
Catholic	−0.042 (0.036)	−0.019 (0.036)	−0.019 (0.035)	−0.024 (0.035)	−0.027 (0.035)
Atheist	0.001 (0.039)	0.000 (0.038)	0.006 (0.038)	−0.007 (0.037)	−0.006 (0.036)
Home Owner	0.083 (0.036)**	0.066 (0.036)*	0.054 (0.036)	0.048 (0.035)	0.048 (0.034)
Sexual Minority	0.000 (0.058)	0.001 (0.056)	−0.003 (0.055)	−0.028 (0.053)	−0.026 (0.054)
Toronto	0.056 (0.036)	0.036 (0.036)	0.050 (0.035)	0.041 (0.034)	0.038 (0.033)
Social Conservatism		−0.273 (0.079)***	−0.250 (0.081)***	−0.255 (0.083)***	−0.270 (0.082)***
Economic Conservatism		0.406 (0.079)***	0.358 (0.080)***	0.363 (0.081)***	0.381 (0.080)***
Liberal Partisan			0.103 (0.036)***	0.104 (0.036)***	0.097 (0.035)***
Conservative Partisan			0.076 (0.042)*	0.084 (0.042)**	0.079 (0.042)*
NDP Partisan			−0.175 (0.058)***	−0.179 (0.059)***	−0.165 (0.057)***
Green Partisan			0.119 (0.112)	0.087 (0.110)	0.070 (0.103)
Economic Evaluation				−0.114 (0.042)***	−0.113 (0.041)***
Mayoral Satisfaction				−0.064 (0.024)***	−0.060 (0.024)**
Public Transit					0.072 (0.064)
Taxes					0.090 (0.033)***
Traffic and Congestion					0.095 (0.086)
Municipal Finances					−0.217 (0.096)***
N	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465
Pseudo R-Squared	0.0797	0.1359	0.1591	0.1955	0.2197

Entries report marginal effects and standard errors (in parentheses)
*: $p < 0.10$, **: $p < 0.05$, ***: $p < 0.01$

variable, moving from the minimum to maximum value (see Appendix I for a description of the coding of each variable). Such an approach allows us to easily compare the magnitude of the effect of each variable upon vote choice.

One of the advantages of the multi-stage approach to explaining vote choice is that it allows researchers to identify the manner in which factors which may tend to be relatively distal to vote choice (such as sociodemographic characteristics) are mediated by more proximate factors (such as ideology, attitudes towards candidates or issues specific to a particular election). The above analysis reveals that several of the factors shown in Model 1 in Tables 3–5 (which include sociodemographic characteristics only) are, in fact, mediated by the variables added in later iterations and models of the analysis. For example, Table 3 reveals that several sociodemographic characteristics are related to support for Olivia Chow but suggests that some of those patterns are driven by attitudinal differences related to one's sociodemographic group. For example, Model 1 suggests that home ownership and sexual orientation (two factors that receive relatively little attention in the voting behaviour literature) were associated (negatively and positively, respectively) with support for Chow. Both of these factors become insignificant, however, when ideological measures are added in Model 2 (the gender and geography variables are also significant in Model 1 but insignificant by Model 5). Such findings suggest that these groups supported (or opposed) Chow on the basis of attitudes held in greater proportion by those with specific sociodemographic characteristics, rather than because of the sociodemographic characteristics themselves.

Nevertheless, it is the full models that deserve the most attention. Tables 3–5 show clearly that the standard approach to explaining vote choice in federal and provincial elections has resonance at the municipal level. Several of the sociodemographic, ideological and partisan measures included in our models display strong relationships with vote choice. Retrospective evaluations and issues also play a significant role in vote choice at this level of government. To present the results in Tables 3–5 in a concise, intuitive manner, we present Figure 1, which shows the marginal effects of each explanatory variable upon the likelihood of support for each mayoral candidate, based upon Model 5 in Tables 3–5. Only statistically significant results are shown. Such an approach allows us to quickly identify and compare the magnitude and direction of effects for each variable and candidate.

Olivia Chow, perceived as the most left-wing candidate and associated with the NDP by most voters, receives much of the traditional left-wing vote. She performs well among young voters, those with low income and atheists. There is also modest evidence that university educated and visible minority electors support her ($p < 0.10$). Unsurprisingly, Chow receives little support from ideologically conservative voters, in either

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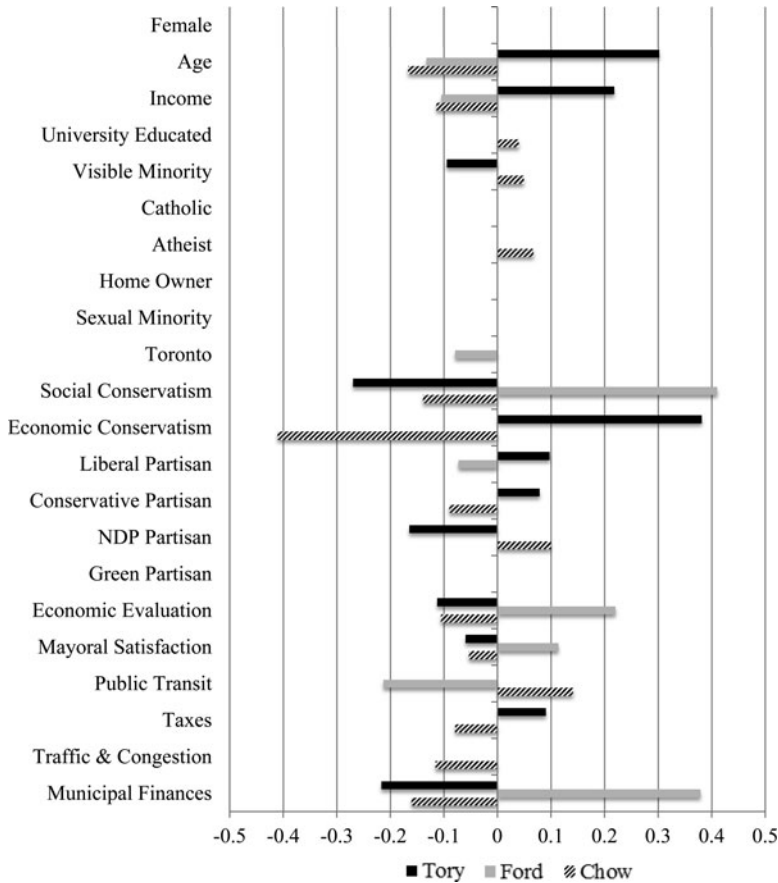
social or economic terms. The effect of the economic conservatism (just over 41 percentage points) is particularly great here. She also performs well among NDP partisans and poorly among Conservatives. As a non-incumbent candidate, she understandably wins support from those individuals who believe the city's economy worsened in the last year, and those who are unsatisfied with the performance of Rob Ford. Finally, issues were a significant consideration for Chow voters, who clearly prioritized public transit.

The story for the right-wing candidates, Ford and Tory, is somewhat more complex, as the two display different relationships with characteristics typically associated with voters of right-wing parties. In terms of sociodemographic characteristics, Ford receives little support from older, wealthier

voters, which is rare for a right-wing candidate. He performs much better in the suburbs than he does in downtown Toronto, as would be expected of such candidates. For his part, Tory seems to receive the traditional right-wing vote, at least as far as sociodemographic characteristics are concerned. He performs well among older, wealthier, non-visible minority voters.

Another interesting area where the two right-wing candidates differ is with respect to social and economic measures of conservatism. Ford is supported by social conservatives, but the economic conservatism variable displays no relationship with a Ford vote. In contrast, a Tory vote is *negatively* associated with social conservatism but has a strong positive association with economic conservatism. In fact, the latter variable has the greatest impact (38 percentage points) of any included in the final model on Tory support. Such a finding suggests that Ford and Tory attracted different types of right-wing voters.

As for partisanship, although both candidates were associated with the Conservative party by a plurality of voters, the Conservative partisanship variable is associated only with one candidate (Tory) and even then this association is somewhat tenuous ($p = 0.059$). Interestingly, though Liberal partisanship is negatively associated with a Ford vote, it is positively associated with Tory support, perhaps due to the fact that Tory was viewed as tied to the Liberals by some voters. NDP partisanship is negatively associated with support for Tory but has no relationship with a Ford vote. Considering that Ford's association with the Conservatives was the weakest of all candidate associations (both perceived and actual), these findings are quite interesting. It suggests that partisanship may more be useful in municipal vote models when there are clear ties between candidates and parties.

Retrospective evaluations and issue positions are also significantly related to support for the two right-wing candidates. Economic evaluations and opinions of Rob Ford's performance work much as one would expect, with both measures positively associated with support for Doug Ford and negatively associated with a Tory vote. The issue variables suggest that Ford voters believed transit to be relatively unimportant but prioritized the state of the city's finances. This resonates with the Ford brothers' focus on leaner government. In contrast, the finances issue was relatively unimportant to Tory voters, who instead believed taxes were an important issue. The various issue results suggest that, in the aggregate, Chow was seen as the best to deal with public transit, Tory for taxes and Ford for municipal finances.

As a whole, the results above show that our version of a standard vote model has resonance at the municipal level in a non-partisan, yet-partisanized mayoral election. A great number of the variables included in the model are statistically significant, and many operate in a logical fashion, based upon the perceived ideological and partisan placements of the candidates. Even without formal parties structuring political competition, voters clearly

differentiated between left- and right-wing candidates, and many variables work much the same way as they do at other levels of political competition in Canada.

Discussion

The primary objective of this paper has been to evaluate whether an accepted approach to understanding vote choice at the national and provincial levels (the multi-stage explanatory model), is applicable to a non-partisan, municipal-level contest. In doing so, we have shown that despite being officially non-partisan, voters understood the 2014 Toronto mayoral election in both ideological and partisan terms. Torontonians clearly differentiated between the three major candidates in terms of left-right placement, and most voters associated the candidates with political parties. Models of the Toronto Election Study data reveal meaningful insights into voter preferences, especially for the choice between left- and right-wing candidates. In sum, we have found that voters approached, reasoned about and made sense of politics in this non-partisan mayoral election in much the same way as they do provincial and national elections.

This study thus shows that standard vote choice models are appropriate for use in non-partisan municipal elections. While the case of Toronto, like any municipality, is unique in noteworthy ways, this study represents a meaningful step forward in the study of both municipal and non-partisan elections. Our results also suggest election-specific context matters. Two of the candidates in the election, Tory and Ford, were seen as ideologically conservative (though Tory was seen as being relatively centrist).[17] As the sole left-wing candidate, Chow received the support of those individuals usually associated with left-wing parties, including low-income voters, the young, those with a university education, visible minorities, atheists, socially and economically left voters and NDP partisans. In contrast, the two candidates on the right divided the traditional conservative vote. Tory won the support of older, wealthier, white voters and economic conservatives who believed that taxes were the most important issue. Ford was supported by voters in the suburbs, social conservatives, and voters who thought the city's finances were a priority. A large factor explaining support for Tory is the absence of a more centrist candidate. He was able to win the support of Liberal partisans, which is by far the largest partisan group in Toronto: 30.9 per cent of TES respondents claimed to be Liberal partisans, as compared to 19.9 per cent, 10.7 per cent and 3.7 per cent for the Conservative party, NDP, and Green party respectively. These voters moved overwhelming towards Tory, and away from Doug Ford, possibly due to attitudes toward his brother, Rob. The unique context of this election therefore had an impact upon the correlates of candidate support.

In closing, the results of this study suggest many fascinating avenues for future research that will strengthen our understanding of voting at the municipal level and the generalizability of vote choice models in general. To begin with, we suggest that our approach to studying municipal elections should be applied to other settings in Canada, including both large and smaller cities. Toronto's 2014 election was high profile in nature, and voters in other settings may not be as able to position candidates ideologically or in partisan terms. In such cases, when information is scarcer, perhaps issues and ideology would be less important than heuristic cues. Canadian municipalities also offer fascinating variation on the extent to which they are partisan in nature. At one end of the spectrum, cities such as Vancouver and some of its neighbouring municipalities have increasingly entrenched parties, while non-partisan Toronto and the majority of other municipalities in Canada are at the other end. In the middle, however, are a number of Quebec cities, such as Montreal, where slates (*équipes*) of candidates form around mayoral candidates and tend to persist for as long as the candidate holds power or contests elections. Our findings about the importance of partisan perceptions and partisan voting suggest that there may be a continuum of "partisanness" to be evaluated. It is also worth investigating what leads voters to associate candidates with parties or ideologies. Toronto may be a particularly "partisanized" case, but voters may attempt to identify partisan links in other contexts as well. Before dismissing the potential impact of partisanship when parties are not contesting elections, future studies would be wise to investigate the degree to which contests are partisanized.

Additionally, we believe there is considerable value in extending the study of municipal vote choice to ward or city council elections, either in the form of single-city or comparative studies. These elections are far less prominent than mayoral races and therefore may present unique challenges for evaluating vote choice factors. What considerations sway voters in such elections? Do the candidate personalities dominate? What is the effect of partisanship, when the conditions exist? Council elections are virgin territory in Canadian politics and offer an opportunity to study Canadian voters in a unique context.

Largely overlooked by scholars of voting behaviour, municipal elections offer a relatively novel context in which to study Canadian electors. Little is known about how voters view and reason about politics in these settings. Accordingly, the potential for research in the field of municipal elections in Canada is significant and, given the sheer number of municipal elections held across the country each year, data should be readily available for researchers. In short, there is no longer any need for municipal elections to maintain their status as poor cousins in the study of elections and voting behaviour.

Endnotes

1   For information on the number of elections see Quesnel (2007) and Sancton (2015). Information on the number of elected official in municipalities is from Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2013).

2   In contrast, the federal government was considered the most impactful level of government by 36.8 per cent of respondents, while the provincial government was selected by only 27.0 per cent.

3   Cutler and Matthews (2005: 360) calls these differences "challenges of both informational quantity and quality."

4   We thank a thoughtful reviewer for providing this terminology.

5   On January 1, 1998, the former City of Toronto was amalgamated with five other lower-tier municipalities (Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, East York and York) and the former upper-tier Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto to create the new City of Toronto. The first election for the new city occurred just prior to amalgamation, in late 1997.

6   The debate over taxes focused mostly on the property tax, Toronto's main own-source revenue and only major tax.

7   The first wave was administered from September 19 until October 26, while the second was administered from October 28 until November 3.

8   As a quality control measure, the TES included a question to ensure that respondents were answering questions seriously (respondents were reimbursed for their participation in the TES). The 3.1 per cent of respondents who 'failed' this question are excluded from our analysis.

9   Appendix I contains the wording of all survey questions used in our analysis.

10 There is some very modest evidence that ideological estimates may be relatively inconsistent at the municipal level, perhaps due to the absence of the structure that parties bring to competition. The standard deviation of the estimates for Chow and Tory are the highest values in that column of Table 1. The standard deviation for the Tory's estimate, however, is the second lowest value observed. We hesitate to draw a conclusion on this matter, though this question may be worthy of future attention.

11 While we are hesitant to identify a causal direction in the relationship between ideological and partisan assessments, the two sets of variables are, indeed, related to one another. For each candidate, we compared ideological estimates from those individuals who associated a candidate with a party to those who did not, and in each instance these groups differed from one another. For Ford, respondents who associated him with a party gave him an average ideological score of 7.8, while this value is 6.4 among respondents who associated him with no party. The corresponding values for Chow are 2.7 and 4.1 respectively, and for Tory they are 6.7 and 5.8. All of these differences are significant at $p < 0.01$. Thus assessments of candidate ideology are related to whether or not candidates are seen to be associated with a party.

12 The idea behind the bloc recursive approach to explaining vote choice is to create several models where vote choice is the outcome variable. Explanatory variables of the same type are arranged in groups, or "blocs," that are similar to one another with respect to proximity to vote choice, and blocs of variables are added in successively according to their assumed distance from vote choice. The model is attractive because it includes a comprehensive range of considerations that may motivate vote choice.

13 In 1997, the Province of Ontario passed a law amalgamating the former City of Toronto with five surrounding municipalities and the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, a second-tier municipality that shared jurisdiction with the six lower-tier ones. Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough were the original, post-war suburbs of the city exhibiting growth patterns (sprawl) similar to post-war suburban development in other North American cities. The former City of Toronto, along with York and East

York, two pre-war suburbs, exhibited a more urban pattern of development similar to downtowns in many other east coast and Great Lake American cities.

14 The Pearson correlation between these indices is 0.255.

15 Note that candidate evaluations are also absent in the model used by Cutler and Matthews (2005), although in that case the explanation is related to the availability of data.

16 For the sake of parsimony, we exclude those individuals who voted for minor candidates (this represents 3.2% of TES respondents).

17 Such a scenario has been seen before at the national level, prior to the merger of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties in 2004.

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APPENDIX I: Survey Questions

Toronto Election Study (2014)

Ideological placement of candidates: On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means left and 10 means right, where would you place (Doug Ford, Olivia Chow, John Tory)?

Sociodemographic characteristics: Dummies for gender, university education, ethnic minority, Catholic and atheist (base = other), home owner, sexual minority, downtown (Toronto versus Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke). Age and income are interval level variables where the minimum reported value has a value of 0 and the maximum a value of 1.

Ideology: *Economic conservatism index*: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (a) Government should leave it entirely up to the

private sector to create jobs (b) Government should see to it that everyone has a decent standard of living, (c) More should be done to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

Social conservatism index: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (a) same-sex marriage rights are a good thing, (b) Society would be better off if fewer women worked outside the home, (c) Canada should admit more immigrants.

Partisanship: In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a *Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Green, Other, None of the above, Don't know.* How strongly do you associate with [answer to question above] party? *Very strongly, Fairly strongly, Not very strongly, Don't know.* (Following Blais et al., 2002), only those respondents who report a "very" or "fairly" strong attachment to a party are coded as partisans.)

Retrospective evaluations: *Sociotropic economic evaluation*: Over the past year, has Toronto's economy gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

Satisfaction with incumbent performance: How satisfied are you with the performance of the current mayor? *Not at all satisfied, Not very satisfied, Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, Fairly unsatisfied, Very satisfied, Don't know.*

Issues: How important are each of the following issues to you in this election? Please indicate each issue's importance on a 0–10 scale, where 0 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important: Public transit, property taxes, traffic and congestion, managing Toronto's finances.

Vote Choice: Which mayoral candidate did you vote for?

Quality control question: To ensure that your browser is downloading the content of this survey correctly, please select option "four" below.

Canadian Election Study (2011)

Ideological placement of parties: In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place the political parties? (Conservative, Liberal, NDP) (0 = left, 10 = right).

Making Electoral Democracy Work, Ontario data (2011)

Ideological placement of parties: Where would you place the following parties on a 1 to 10 scale, where 0 means far left and 10 means far right? (Liberal, NDP, Progressive Conservatives).