

**Promotional and Other Spending by Party Candidates  
in the 2006 Canadian Federal Election Campaign**

Alex J. Marland

Memorial University of Newfoundland

**ABSTRACT**

This article describes the types of goods and services purchased by Bloc Québécois, Conservative, Green, Liberal and NDP candidates in the 2006 Canadian federal election campaign. Observations are made on thousands of spending declarations included in election returns filed with Elections Canada, such as newspaper advertising, signs, telemarketing, and even windshield repair. Particular attention is paid to types of communications suppliers, party centralization, and winter electioneering while trends are identified in media, technology, labour, professionalization, and political finance. The result is a descriptive summary of a wide variety of promotional and administrative functions which can supplement other studies of constituency campaigning.

Election campaigns are ultimately exercises in communications.<sup>1</sup> Party leaders rehearse for televised debates, party organizations purchase television advertising, journalists report on daily campaign events, pundits post commentary online, supporters attend rallies, and candidates chat with electors on their doorsteps. Despite all the national media attention, surveys have found that a fifth to a quarter of Canadian voters say that it was the local candidates who were the most important factor in their vote decision (Pammett and Vickers 2001). This conviction wanes under the scrutiny of multivariate analysis which points to the supremacy of political partisanship, party centralization, leadership factors, and media conglomeration. As a result campaigning in electoral districts is routinely ignored in many analyses (Clarke et al. 2006) and political

parties seem to recognize that such electioneering matters only in close races (Flanagan 2007). Consequently constituency campaigning such as brochure distribution and canvassing is unfairly dismissed by many observers as little more than a ritual (Marland 2003).

Until recently Canada's political scientists had all but abandoned the study of candidates' promotional efforts. Case studies (Sayers 1991 and 1999) and survey data (Carty 1991) have been important resources which have been supplemented by statistical analyses of local spending data (Carty and Eagles 2005; Rekkas 2007). Yet, even in comparative context (Denver and Hands 1993), our awareness of election behaviour in parliamentary districts still lacks an intimate level of detail. Researchers, as Palda (2001: 2) has put it, have busily "hammered each other with statistics" without much qualitative description of how campaign money is actually spent.

Canadian research on campaign expenditures (e.g., Paltiel 1974) has tended to focus on total spending and on aggregate data in broad categories established by Elections Canada, such as non-broadcast advertising costs or office expenses. This has shown that local spending can impact vote results both before (Evans 2006) and during the campaign (Eagles 2004), particularly for unsuccessful opposition candidates (Carty and Eagles 1999). But it remains difficult to describe how money, time and effort is invested locally. Quantitative analysis can leave us assuming how money is spent because of researchers' reliance on the expense categories. Nowhere is the minutiae of electioneering such as shopping at a "99 cents or less" store, fixing a cracked windshield, or hiring a welder mentioned, yet these are some of the things that constituency campaigns are involved with during the official campaign period.

Expanding our knowledge of paid electioneering is important given the changes associated with Bill C-24 (2003) that amended the *Canada Elections Act*. There is a particular need for candidates to spend efficiently in Canada because regulations limit most of them to under \$100,000. Yet there can also be an incentive to spend irrationally because some of them qualify for a partial refund of expenses after the election. For political parties, there is a financial incentive to participate in even unwinnable ridings because each vote is now worth an annual stipend, which may contribute to a renewed top-down emphasis on grassroots electioneering. It is also a point of potential concern that over time the federal government has been increasingly subsidizing campaign spending and just what is being subsidized can pass without scrutiny.

The following narrative of how major parties' candidates spent money in the 2006 Canadian general election provides a descriptive inventory of paid promotional and administrative tasks. This behind-the-scenes look seems to support Carty's (1991, 184) generalization that there is "not much" about local electoral communications "that would surprise constituency politicians of earlier generations." Yet it documents the modernization of constituency campaigning, such as the use of technology and the professionalization of labour services, and sheds light on the tediousness of much electioneering behaviour.

First, spending regulations and declarations procedures for 2006 are discussed. A summary of some of the thousands of suppliers follows, beginning with administrative functions and promotional activities. These were noted from a visual review of the text entries of suppliers that was occasionally supplemented by keyword and online searches.<sup>2</sup> An overview of professional communications services reveals the presence of party

coordination in the constituencies. Finally a comment on winter campaigning (itself rarely discussed) sets up an analysis discussion. These pan-Canadian observations can supplement the aforementioned empirical analyses by increasing our awareness of the variety of matters that local campaigners occupy themselves with. They also build off detailed discussions about localized campaigning during the 1988 contest (Carty 1991; Sayers 1999).

### **Candidate Spending Rules and Dataset**

Canada's fifth federal winter election campaign began on November 29, 2005 and concluded 56 days later on January 23, 2006 with Stephen Harper's Conservatives defeating Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin. This event was 20 days longer than usual to accommodate the holiday season. It also was the second campaign governed by Bill C-24 (political financing) which introduced a monetary allowance payable to political parties on a quarterly basis during the inter-election period – thus making each vote obtained in 2006 worth a \$1.75 annual stipend to qualifying parties. These subsidies have benefited the smaller Bloc Québécois and Green parties in particular (Young et al. 2007).

Rules designed to control candidates' spending are in effect from the moment that individuals come forward to represent a political party. At the nomination stage an official agent must begin authorizing all revenues and expenditures. During the general election, campaigning is subject to a spending limit that is based, in part, on the number of electors in the riding and the average number of electors per square kilometre, which in 2006 resulted in caps of between \$62,210 (Malpeque, PEI) and \$106,290 (Peace River, Alberta). The agents of each candidate are required to submit an itemized and audited description of all financial transactions to Elections Canada within four months of

Election Day. There are two key financial incentives for complying: a \$1,000 deposit is refunded and candidates earning at least 10 per cent of the vote are reimbursed 60 per cent of their eligible expenditures. The former is an inducement for weak performers while the latter encourages more successful campaigns to comply.

These candidate election returns are a tremendous resource for researchers that can facilitate the evaluation of hundreds of simultaneous campaigns. Denver and Hands (1993) believe that such data are the best substitute if a direct measurement of local campaigning is unavailable while Carty and Eagles (2005 27) have submitted that looking at candidates' finances provides "the sharpest insight into the impact and distinctiveness of constituency-level forces in Canadian politics". Over the past four decades the availability of these data has improved considerably. In the 1960s, newspapers ran summaries of candidates' expenditure declarations, and the details were accessible at a nominal fee for just six months afterwards (Paltiel 1970: 115). As recently as the early 1990s, there were vague notions of what constituted election expenses, transactions in the "other expenses" category were surreptitiously hidden, and Elections Canada waited up to three years to receive some records (Stanbury 1991). Such data are accessible online nowadays but in the literature they still tend to be discussed in broad terms.

In 2006, candidates' election expenses were itemized in the "Statement of Electoral Campaign Expenses" (Part 3a) of each return. Each written entry identified the provider of the goods or services in a "supplier" column. The dollar amount paid for election expenses subject to the limit was documented in one of seven columns: radio/TV advertising; other advertising; election survey research (a new category as of 2003);

office rent, heat and light expenses; other office expenses including telephone; salaries and wages; or, miscellaneous expenses. The aggregate spending totals in each of these categories are often analyzed but the text in the supplier column has heretofore received little or no attention.

To compile a dataset the 3a data were downloaded<sup>3</sup> from the Elections Canada Web site for each of the 1,307 Conservative, Bloc Québécois, Green, Liberal, and New Democratic party candidates.<sup>4</sup> At times there was a considerable range of declarations, with some candidates' spending totalling over \$100,000, whereas some Greens declared only bank fees or nothing whatsoever. These do not directly reflect activities that have no declared cost such as door knocking or candidates' emotional appeals (Jerit 2004) and there are presumably some reporting inaccuracies (Stanbury 1991). However remarking on the types of suppliers can assist us in understanding what is procured by constituency campaigns and help determine if a future codified analysis is warranted for the tens of thousands of line entries (Table 1) to build on the visual review that follows.

**Table 1**  
**Quantity of Text Entries in Part 3a Supplier Column**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b># text entries</b>	<b>Mean per candidate</b>
Bloc Québécois	75	8,818	117.6
Conservative	308	22,250	72.2
Green	308	2,982	9.7
Liberal	308	19,286	62.6
New Democratic	308	12,856	41.7
All	1,307	66,192	50.6

Note: includes all election expenses subject to the limit as well as "candidate personal expenses" and "amounts not included in election expenses"

### **Local Spending Amidst the National Campaign**

One of the basic things that competitive Canadian election candidates tend to spend money on is a campaign office. The most vibrant organizations rent space to provide a visible headquarters where they can give instructions to workers, hold meetings, store brochures, coordinate Election Day efforts, and perhaps host a post-election party. Its official opening may attract local media attention and sometimes a candidate in an expansive riding may open multiple offices (Bell and Bolan 1991). But there are also many low profile candidates who simply work with family members out of their basement (Sayers 1999).

The review of suppliers offers an intriguing level of administrative detail about constituency campaign offices (examples of entries are displayed in Table 2). Expenditure data indicate that once the building space is rented—sometimes from party electoral district associations or numbered companies—there may be a need for new locks or for security alarm services. Carpeting and rented furniture may be next, followed by business machines such as computers, photocopiers and faxes, as well as perhaps kitchen appliances; at times these require that moving services be hired. Telephone, Internet, cable and satellite television services are hooked up. Basic supplies (printer toner seems to be a common need) are routinely gathered from business stores. Postage stamps are licked and couriers are called. Mobile phones and long distance charges are billed, including workers often being compensated for using their own phones. In a winter campaign an office also incurs heating bills.

**Table 2**  
**Examples of Declared Campaign Suppliers: Administrative Activities**

<b>Rent, heat and light</b>	
100390 P.E.I. Inc. Barrie Conservative Association Charter Management Inc. City of Melfort Water Dept. Co-Operators General Insurance	Lloydminster Agricultural Exhibition Assn Maritime Electric Ontario Security Systems Reliable Furniture & Appliances School Dist.#14
<b>Other office (including telephone)</b>	
Advance Electronics CIBC Bank Louis, Willy North Bay Mat Rental Roy's Copier Service	Shop Easy Foods Staples Business Depot Tactical Advantage Campaigns Telus U-Haul Center Dartmouth

Drawing upon the election returns we can elaborate on the comforts offered to headquarter workers that were hinted at by Brook (1991 142). Bottled water may be available, as well as soft drinks, coffee and occasionally a tippie of wine, liquor or beer. Staff buy groceries; eat pizza, fried chicken and Chinese food; and order cakes. The office and its windows may be professionally cleaned, computers are repaired, electricians are hired and a plumber may even be needed. When the campaign is over, some offices pay for public storage space, and some avail of a shredding company's services. Perhaps the most universal office expenditure, though, may be paying service fees to banks.

Getting to a financial institution and commuting around an electoral district often involves calculating mileage on personal motor vehicles or else renting transportation from a local dealership. Gasoline and insurance expenses are regularly billed. Bridge toll fees are paid, overnight accommodations are declared, and in 2006 one campaign appears to have rented a motor home. In urban areas some candidates pay parking fees, take taxis, or ride the subway. In more rural districts, tickets are purchased for bus coaches, for the train, for ferries, for commercial airlines, for charter flights and even for helicopters.



Unfortunately for some travellers there are also unplanned expenses such as parking tickets, new tires and auto glass repair.

On the whole campaigns have been adjusting to a declining pool of volunteers. Concurrently the value of unpaid workers with specialized skill sets has been increasing in relation to the sophistication of more expensive campaign tactics (Stanbury 1991: 12). This is supplemented by professional assistance including media experts and graphic designers (Sayers, 1991) while the local hiring of private-sector telemarketers and advertising agencies is a somewhat more recent development (Carty 1991: 177; Preyra 1991).

The review of suppliers indicates that volunteer training sessions are delivered in various parts of Canada but that thousands of campaign workers are remunerated (examples of entries are displayed in Table 3). Financial professionals such as auditors, official agents and accountants may be compensated. Graphic designers, language translators and event speakers are remunerated. Telemarketing firms are hired to administer the telephone canvass<sup>5</sup> and scores of individuals, some of whose full names are unknown, may be given small sums of money (presumably for work on Election Day) although some individuals are paid thousands of dollars. Money may be given to a political party's local electoral district association and a number of campaigns seek help through temporary staffing agencies.<sup>6</sup> Drivers are compensated, perhaps with a flat gasoline rate for signage duties, with a mileage rate, or with a fee for transporting supporters to the polls. There are also instances of paying for babysitting. At the end of the campaign sometimes security services are hired for a victory party and a "party maid"

might clean up. Presumably many campaign managers are paid (Carty 1991) however in 2006 this position title was not included in any of these declarations.

**Table 3**  
**Examples of Declared Campaign Suppliers: Staffing and Other Expenses**

<b>Salaries and wages</b>	
Bloc Québécois	Paquin, Sylvain
Gill, Parmjeet Singh	Prince Edward Hastings Federal Green Party
Green, Peter	Receiver General of Canada
Les Productions Bros	School District 20
NDP of Canada	Unknown, Ricky
<b>Miscellaneous expenses</b>	
Baba Banquet Hall	Grimshaw Trucking Ltd.
Bonanza Gold Motel & RV Park	Hume Hotel
Co-op Supermarket	Liberal Party of Canada
Embers Bar & Grill	Manitoba Liquor Control commission
Enterprise Rent-A-Car Canada	Yellow Cab

Experienced managers know that they must be highly selective in their promotional decisions. Locally, most television advertising is expensive, time-consuming and inefficient, while even a single full-page advertisement in a major newspaper can put a sizeable dent in a candidate's budget. There is therefore a need to choose nimble media, such as community newspapers or radio, which is most likely to reach targeted electors within an electoral district's boundaries (Sayers 1999). Despite the widespread syndication of national campaign events, candidates are featured surprisingly often in local media coverage, but paid media are necessary because there is no guarantee of news attention particularly for those candidates unlikely to win (Carty and Eagles 2000).

Candidates employ a wide range of promotional suppliers (examples of entries are displayed in Table 4). Sometimes local decision makers pay for media monitoring and news release distribution. Canada Post's services are commonly used. Flyers are photocopied at rapid coping centres and the occasional thermographer provides embossed

printing. Media events are coordinated in rented hotel space, community centres or banquet halls. Sometimes a convention centre is booked for the party leader's visit. Ambiance may be provided by musicians, disc jockeys, high school bands or community jazz ensembles for attendees who dine on catered food. Audio equipment is rented and sometimes the dining tables are too.

**Table 4**  
**Examples of Declared Campaign Suppliers: Promotional Activities**

<b>Radio/TV advertising</b>	
Bowdens Radio/TV Vancouver Cable TV Multimedia CKJS 810 AM Desh Punjab Radio Ltd Ile-a-la Crosse Communications Society Inc.	Lone Wolf Television Production Services Native Communications Inc. Phoenix Advertising Group Inc. Unex Professional Multimedia Corp Yahoo Broadcasting
<b>Other advertising</b>	
Brain Box Strategic Communications Canada Post Corporation Canadian Punjabi Post Digital H press.com - van painting High Tech Printing & Signs Ltd.	Jig Jag Printing Northeast Avalon Times Parti Liberal du Canada Paul's Reliable Flyer Distribution Windsor Plywood
<b>Election surveys or other surveys or research</b>	
C Comm Network Corporation Charron, Marie-Andrée Conservative Fund Canada Géocom Communication Inc. Kelly Services	Petite Caisse Stratcom Telus Communications Inc Venture Market Research Corp Voter Identification Solutions Inc.

The expenditures reveal a wide range of local media choices. Ads are taken out in mass publications such as *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and community papers such as the *Journal Haute-Côte-Nord*. Many advertisements are targeted at narrow markets, including in ethnic by-weeklies such as *The Ukrainian News*, in trade publications such as *Voice of the Farmer*, in classified advertising weeklies such as *The Pennysaver*, in by-monthly magazines such as *Global Eyes*, and even in lifestyle magazines such as *Forever Young* that have circulation on both sides of the Canada-US border. Ads appear in publications focusing on entertainment such as *Ottawa Weekend*, on an age cohort such

as *Thunder Bay Seniors*, on post-secondary students such as the *Charlatan*, and on religion such as *The Jewish Post & News*. Sometimes distribution is tightly contained within a riding such as with Toronto's *Hi-Rise Community Newspaper* for residents in apartments and townhouses. Broadcast advertising is used much less frequently than print. The recording of radio spots at sound studios may be billed and ads appear on mainstream radio outlets like Durham Radio, ethnic outlets such as Desh Punjab Radio, community stations such as Saskatoon's CFCR, and sports radio such as Montreal's Team 990. Occasionally, local cable television advertising is purchased (such as on a programming listing channel) or political commercials appear on ethnic TV programming such as *Radio et Television Arabe au Canada*. In 2006 one campaign advertised at a movie theatre in Lethbridge (Alberta).

Online media still seem to be sparsely used. Political parties' Web sites have typically provided information about candidates, including photographs, biographies, contact information and links to individual Web sites (Small 2004). The spending figures indicate that site design, domain name registration and hosting services may be commissioned by some local candidates independently of the national party. Such sites appear to be designed locally although some such services are purchased online. There are limited indications of Webcasting and of banner ads being purchased on local news Web sites such as Sault Ste. Marie's LTVNews.com, and on more topical sites such as the Election Prediction Project, however online advertising rarely appears as an identifiable line item. E-commerce is also becoming a local fixture. This includes online purchases for items such as campaign buttons, signs, embroidered clothing and staff

training services. Sometimes money is received from electors through online credit card processing and is spent using the PayPal electronic payment system.

There is also a sizable volume of signage and a wide range of peripheral activities. Signs are routinely purchased as are associated supplies such as lumber and rebar for stakes. Some signage is ordered online but the preferred option is to buy locally. There are a wide variety of choices available<sup>7</sup> and the time of year does not seem to diminish local activists' desire for signs – one candidate even hired a cold air inflatable balloon. Other promotional initiatives seem to reflect the perennial achievements of novelty company salespersons (Brook 1991, 141). The spending data show that such political paraphernalia is obtained from flag shops, button stores, photographers, calendar distributors, trophy engravers and sticker suppliers. Party supplies and tents are rented, greeting cards are purchased, and flowers are sent to funeral homes. Automobiles are decorated, nametags are worn, and business cards are handed out. Customized clothing seems to be a popular item, with workers sometimes receiving embroidered or screen printed T-shirts and hats, while candidates may purchase business attire, shop at dress stores, or have their garments cleaned by drycleaners. Some bill for haircuts. A close look reveals that in 2006 a pair of eyeglasses was declared and while denture repair took a small bite out of the budget of another candidate.

Most constituency campaigns prioritize such matters over commissioning opinion research. While it might be helpful to reflect electors' preferences in a parliamentary system the decision not to spend money on research may be a sensible one. This is not just because primary data collection is so expensive but also because party candidates have little ability to change in response to local preferences. Moreover, often it is

incumbents in very safe seats that have the resources to hire research firms (Marland 2005). For most candidates, it is far more practical and familiar to focus on a sales operation that involves identifying supporters and getting out the vote. Nevertheless, it was not uncommon for thousands of dollars to be declared in the research category as being given to telemarketers, opinion research firms, and to the national party organization.<sup>8</sup>

A variety of other supplier declarations are worth mentioning. Money is given to community organizations such as neighbourhood associations, seniors' groups, charities and museums; to local services such as fire associations; to business associations such as chambers of commerce; and to religious groups and churches. Legal matters such as court costs and lawyers' fees are addressed. Losses from crime may be cited (presumably vandalized and "misplaced" signs). Health aspects emerge, such as athletic medical supplies, drug store purchases, and fitness centre fees.<sup>9</sup> Expenses involving public institutions such as the House of Commons, Elections Ontario and public libraries may be itemized. These and other unusual declarations, such as the \$42.80 in advertising purchased from a pawnbroker in Saskatoon--Wanuskewin, support Carty et al.'s (2000, 175) comment that local campaigns "can be quite idiosyncratic". Finally, some potentially interesting entries in 2006 turned out to be routine after some online research. Advertising with "Orville Santa" in Thunder Bay was not some sort of Christmas promotion but rather involved a former municipal councillor who provided communication services. "Lovers Warehouse" in London was not a sexual pleasure store but instead a furniture and warehouse equipment supplier. However understanding other curious entries, such as "Bell Élection 2005" in Sherbrooke or the now defunct

“politicalvision.ca,” would need to be explained by the campaigns involved and helps to illustrate the considerable effort that would be required to codify text entries.

### **Local Communications Suppliers and Party Coordination**

Such a wide array of promotional activities requires people to coordinate strategy, design, production and placement. Advertising can be produced in-house by party workers, in conjunction with media consultants, or it can be wholly outsourced to a commercial agency. Political parties’ symbiotic association with suppliers sometimes rewards these consultants with more lucrative or prestigious contracts after the campaign (Cross 2004).

The presence of communications suppliers in candidates’ declarations can help gauge the centralized ‘top down’ control of the national parties over individual electoral districts versus any regionalized ‘horizontal’ teamwork among party candidates. Campaign centralization creates economies of scale (such as using an identical telephone script with a trustworthy supplier), promotes unity, brokers ideas, and can improve electoral prospects among other benefits. Central party staff may therefore expect local units to follow the instructions of provincial organizers (Preyra 1991), to accommodate a party leader’s visit (Belanger et. al. 2003), and to purchase thousands of dollars worth of campaign materials from the party so that it can present a consistent image (Cross 2004). This tends to occur in winnable ridings in what Carty et al. (2000) describe as a balancing act between the party wanting to help and wanting to control. The downside is that in Canada candidates’ ability to promote their constituents’ concerns is muffled by party discipline. Concentrated power can replace their independence from party bosses with

sycophancy and there is reduced freedom to respond to local dynamics. Furthermore pan-Canadian or even regional party tactics may not fit within a given riding.

The 2006 supplier data reveal a flow of money from parties' constituency campaigns to the national party. Sometimes this involved large sums that were paid for a variety of advertising, telemarketing, salaries or office expenses. Amounts of up to thousands of dollars were provided to the Bloc Québécois National, the Conservative Fund of Canada, the Green Party of Canada, the Federal Liberal Agency of Canada, or the NDP of Canada.<sup>10</sup> Provincial units such as the Parti Libéral du Canada (Quebec) or subdivisions such as the National Women's Liberal Association or the Young Liberals received funds. Some costs were quite low, such as \$10 paid to the Conservative party for a "service charge," or \$135 extended for "NDP insurance." Spending was also declared to compensate party riding associations.

The horizontal flow of resources between candidates was less obvious (Table 5). This involved relatively small transactions for what appears to have been collaboration on regional advertising. For instance, six Conservatives each declared \$219.06 for a fellow Edmonton candidate. In doing so, they participated in the Tories' successful attempt to defeat Liberal minister Anne McLellan, in a marginal seat that was targeted by the national party organization.

**Table 5**  
**Indications of Cooperation Initiated among Candidates**

<b>Spenders</b>	<b>Expenditure Item</b>	<b>Note</b>
Six Edmonton-area Conservative candidates	\$219.06 for the "Laurie Hawn Campaign"	Conservative candidate in Edmonton Centre
Four London-area NDP candidates	\$70.54 for the "Tim McCallum Campaign"	NDP candidate in Elgin--Middlesex--London
Five Calgary-area NDP candidates	\$200 for "John Chan, Calgary North Centre NDP Candidate"	NDP candidate in Calgary North Centre



This neighbourhood cooperation raises the possibility that some candidates may have likewise teamed up in selecting paid communications services. Cross (2004) has remarked on the regionalization of local campaigning and if, as Carty (2002) suggests, most local candidates are merely party franchisees then we should find similar election suppliers along party lines within regions. To gather data, keyword searches of supplier text entries were performed to serve as a barometer of communications service providers.<sup>11</sup>

It would seem unlikely that party candidates hiring the same communications consultants did so by coincidence or because of limited local supply. There is robust evidence to suggest that some constituency campaigns followed recommendations from nearby colleagues, regional campaign chairs, and/or the national party. The expenditure data indicate that this often occurred within the same city or province (Table 6) such as all four PEI Liberals hiring the same Charlottetown marketing services provider. There was also joint use of quantitative opinion data services, promotional sales, and telemarketers. The Responsive Marketing Group (RMG) was listed as a supplier for seven Conservatives and is a good example of party centralization. Flanagan (2007, 86) states that in 2003 this telemarketing company was tasked with coordinating “all” of the party’s voter-contact work and that RMG’s services “linked nicely” with the party centre’s “Constituency Information Management System” that stored voter identification data.

**Table 6**  
**Indications of Top-Down Party Coordination**

<b>Spenders</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Mean Expenditure</b>
15 Conservative candidates (mostly in Ontario)*	Voter Track (Toronto-based telemarketer)	\$3,276
Seven Conservative candidates (mostly in Ontario)	The Responsive Marketing Group (Toronto-based telemarketer)	\$6,224
Six Alberta Conservative candidates	MKM Margaret Kool Marketing Inc. (Edmonton-based marketing consultant)	\$6,976
Four Ontario Conservative candidates	Marketeks (Ottawa-based print, promotional and design services)	\$3,064
80 Liberal candidates from six provinces (mostly in Ontario)	First Contact Voter Contact Management (Toronto-based telemarketer)	\$13,644
Eight Liberal candidates (five provinces)	Voter Identification Solutions Inc. (Saskatoon-based telemarketer)	\$1,620
Five Nova Scotia Liberal candidates	The Campaign Store (American online campaign supplies)	\$2,951
Four PEI Liberal candidates	Results Marketing and Advertising (Charlottetown-based marketers)	\$3,366
Three NDP candidates (Yukon, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia)	NOW Communications (Vancouver-based social marketer)	\$3,170

\*One Liberal also declared hiring this supplier.

The data in Table 6 simultaneously illustrate the continued professionalization of communications at the constituency level particularly with respect to phone canvassing. Cross (2004) has documented the use of voter identification software packages and paints a picture of riding associations pleading with their party to be included in regional telemarketing operations. The clearest example of such management in 2006 involved First Contact Voter Contact Management. All told nearly \$1.1 million was paid by 80 Liberal candidates (59 in Ontario with another 10 in British Columbia) to this party telemarketer that had over a dozen call centre locations across Canada. Its services included membership recruitment drives, pre-writ calling, identification of sign locations and voters, persuasion calling, and contacting supporters on advance polling and election days (First Contact 2007). The firm also sold data services, such as list management,

acquiring telephone numbers and assigning values for each voter regarding their “probability of voting Liberal”.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, VoterTrack (2007) dealt with 15 Conservatives, all but one of whom was in Ontario. It advocated targeted electioneering by using computer software to track and manage support levels, voter issues, volunteers, donors, signage, donations and expenses. The company offered automated surveys whereby electors could participate using a touch-tone phone, incoming voicemail messages that could be sent as text to an e-mail address, and canvassing tools such as bar codes and handheld data entry devices. Campaign workers could access a “web-based campaign manager” centralized database from almost anywhere in the riding using cable Voice over Internet Protocol which stored information about each elector (Mercer, 2005).

Individual relationships with telemarketers seem to have emerged in response to the desire to access the most innovative technologies. Calgary’s Voicelink (2007) provided automated speech recognition technology to a Conservative in British Columbia and to one in Nova Scotia. Its opinion surveys, canvassing and GOTV (get out the vote) efforts were automated by computer software that telephoned respondents, administered questions and converted voice answers into electronic data that were remotely accessible through the Internet. This service was purportedly faster, cheaper and more efficient than humans working from call centres. Another modern campaign tactic used locally in 2006 was automated phone calling—known in the industry as permission based voice broadcasting, autodialing, or robocalling— which rapidly dispatched a prerecorded telephone message to thousands of households. There was also an instance of relatively sophisticated direct mail circulated by a couple of Saskatchewan Conservatives and a

Liberal who obtained mailing lists and/or labelling services from a Regina direct marketing specialist.

If we consider the waning local presence of the professionals who coordinate the parties' national television advertising it might seem that Bill C-24 has weakened parties' top-down coordination. In 2006 the NDP's broadcasting purchase agent (Broadcasting Arbitrator, 2005) received money from three candidates, the Liberals' agent from one, and the other parties' agents were not named in their candidates' returns. Yet the Bloc's agent in 2006, Touché Media Marketing, had been a handsomely paid supplier for 71 of 75 Bloc candidates in 2000.<sup>13</sup> That year, the Liberal and Canadian Alliance agents also each appeared in one candidate's declarations. Supplier loyalties can cross party lines too. In 2006 Bald Eagle Consulting provided marketing services to ridings that were over 1,700km apart in Newmarket--Aurora (Ontario) and in Kings--Hants (Nova Scotia). The candidates there, MPs Belinda Stronach and Scott Brison, were former Tory leadership contenders who were Liberal Cabinet ministers by the time they sought re-election. Bald Eagle (2004) had managed Stronach's online campaigning when she was a Conservative candidate in the 2004 election and continued to do so after she switched parties.

Sometimes candidates have even more personal ties with a communications supplier such as being an employee or even the owner (Table 7).<sup>14</sup> For instance, the 2006 data help reveal that a Conservative incumbent owned the business that was hired by two dozen Conservative candidates across eight provinces (although not in his own Ottawa area riding). As anticipated some supplier relationships continue after an election. InCiteVision (2007) communications sold election Web site and graphic design services to two Liberals in Ontario. A year later, it offered "MP Packages" consisting of Web site

design and access to a television studio to record online video messages, and counted Liberal MPs, the party's Ontario wing and a federal leadership candidate among its clients. In another case, a communications consultant hired by the incumbent in St. John's South--Mount Pearl later received a \$14,800 information technology consulting contract from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (2007), less than four months after that Conservative MP became Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. As well, some suppliers provided services across multiple elections. In 2000, an Edmonton public relations and Internet communications firm named First Past the Post was hired by nine Canadian Alliance candidates (Marland, 2005), and the next year it managed the Web site for Harper's Alliance leadership campaign (Flanagan, 2007 39). Two general elections and a party merger later First Past the Post (2007) was listed as a supplier for the Conservatives in Edmonton--Sherwood Park. Soon afterwards on its own Web site it advertised sites that it had designed for three Conservative MPs in Edmonton.

**Table 7**  
**Indications of Pre- and Post-Campaign Relationships between Candidates and Suppliers**

<b>Spenders</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
Two Bloc Québécois candidates	Flip Communications & Stratégies Inc. (employer of one of the candidates)	\$13,189 (mean)
24 Conservative candidates in eight provinces	3D Contact Inc. (owned by a Conservative MP)	\$1,184 (mean)
Conservative candidate in Edmonton--Sherwood Park	First Past the Post (provided services to Canadian Alliance candidates in 2000)	\$1,605
Conservative candidate in Jonquière--Alma	Blackburn-Communications Inc. (named after the candidate)	\$5,417
Conservative candidate in St. John's South--Mount Pearl	Hawco Communications (received post-campaign government contract)	\$1,236
Two Ontario Green candidates	Tiger Advertising (owned by one of the candidates)	\$2,416 (mean)
Six Ontario Liberal candidates	Policomm (Liberal-affiliated campaign tactics consultancy)	\$11,095 (mean)
Two Ontario Liberal candidates	InCiteVision communications (also used by Liberals post-campaign)	\$1,200

Finally, the visual review identified some constituency organizations working alone with smaller service providers. These tended to have less of an online presence (sometimes none at all) and included communications boutiques, industry specialists, signage suppliers and ad hoc individual consultants. Their services were quite specialized, including translating, fundraising, and customized advertising items. For instance, a pan-Canadian event management company provided audio visual staging services such as lighting and webcasting at press conferences in Newmarket--Aurora (Ontario), while a marketing communications firm that was hired in Western Arctic (Northwest Territories) offered services in Inuktitut and had branches in all three of Canada's territories.

### **Winter Constituency Campaigning**

Campaigning in Canada's northern territories has always been fraught with logistical challenges. They are some of the most likely of the hundreds of ridings throughout the country to be subject to snowfall and freezing temperatures. Given the challenges of winter it is not surprising that Canadian federal elections tend to be held between the spring and autumn.<sup>15</sup> The early 2006 campaign was the first winter election in a quarter of a century and we might ask what types of local expenditure declarations responded to the weather, reduced daylight hours, and the holiday season. After all, media reports proclaimed that campaign workers would have a difficult time putting lawn signs into frozen ground, that candidates would pester electors in shopping malls, and that it would be too cold for politicians to chat on doorsteps (Francoli 2005; Kent 2005b; Tibbetts 2005). Prime Minister Martin often blamed Harper for an unwanted Christmas election (Sallot 2005) and it was widely anticipated that there would be considerably

lower turnout on Election Day (LeDuc and Pammett 2006).<sup>16</sup> Post-campaign analyses have also inferred that winter elections are undesirable (Clarke et al. 2006).

Such fear mongering about winter seems to reflect a lack of institutional memory of the February 1980 contest. True, turnout did decline then by 6.4 per cent compared to the May 1979 election, and winter campaigns do tend to have lower turnout than at other times of the year (Studlar 2001). In late 1979, as in late 2005, politicians were somewhat reluctant to bring down a minority government and there was little visible electioneering until the New Year (Landes 1981). But some analyses of that campaign (Irvine 1981; Berch 1993) make no mention of seasonal matters while another discussion only noted that a longer electioneering period was chosen then because “campaigning could not realistically take place” during the holiday season (Duffy 2002, 289). Indeed, as Blais et al. (2004) have observed, low temperatures matter less than if the campaign occurs during a time of year that electors are more likely to be on holidays.

This was especially the case in late 2005 and early 2006 because of unseasonably mild weather conditions (Weeks 2006). Party leaders and candidates tended to reduce or even shut down operations between December 24 and January 3 in what Guy (2007, 4) calls a “time-out” agreed upon by all parties; the Martin Liberals seemed to wait until January to campaign in earnest.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless some national campaigning decisions had to be adjusted due to weather such as Harper not being able to make an Arctic policy announcement in Iqaluit (Flanagan 2007: 246).

At the local level, candidates’ supplier declarations confirm media reports that some of them purchased newspaper advertisements extending holiday greetings, and assuring the public campaigning would be put on hold until the New Year. Others

decreased their canvassing, cut back on office staffing, and focused on sign distribution. Some local politicians reportedly served Christmas dinner with charitable organizations and some attended New Year's Eve parties (Kent 2005a; Nolan 2005; Welch 2005). Those searching for votes during the last week of December likely visited areas where electors gathered indoors, such as shopping malls, coffee shops and retirement homes. In the New Year, a renewed emphasis on distributing signs emerged, spurred by volunteers who had postponed participating (Sadava 2006).

It is sensible that campaigners would mingle indoors with electors who were warming up. Could it be that, on the ground, the 2006 winter campaign was waged in coffeehouses? Tim Horton's restaurants can act as a bellwether of indoor electioneering. According to candidate returns, not much money was spent at the franchise – a total of just over \$4,600 by the five major parties' candidates, about a third of which was from Harper's team in his district of Calgary Southwest. Then again, this represents thousands of cups of coffee and there were visits in each province. Yet only 38 of the 1,307 candidates declared spending time at Tim's: 22 Conservatives and 10 Liberals, with the remaining six candidates from the other three parties. Of course purchases are not required for glad handing in such establishments and there are also many other blends of associated suppliers that could be considered, including the Williams Coffee Pub, cybercafés such as the Swweet Retreats Internet Café, and the coffee provided at campaign headquarters (as well as advertisements in coffeehouse weeklies such as the *Coffee News* or office space rented from Coffee Time). Furthermore candidates made hundreds of visits to various cafés, fast food establishments, Royal Canadian Legions, watering holes and diners. That said, coffeehouse electioneering is hardly a winter



activity – Harper himself had held a photo opportunity at a Tim Horton’s the previous July (“Harper’s Image,” 2005).

Some supplier entries do appear to reflect the climate or time of year. Candidates were involved with sporting that included snowmobiling, curling, skiing and bowling. They advertised in local ice hockey publications, gave money to youth hockey tournaments, and sponsored local events such as a Carnaval des Neiges and the Labrador Winter Games. Newspaper ads wished electors a Merry Christmas, some teams distributed Christmas calendars, and the Bloc Québécois in Shefford sponsored Opération Nez Rouge (a Christmas designated driver campaign). Purchases of sand, landscaping and excavating services were seemingly for ice control and snow clearing at campaign headquarters. One candidate appears to have rented a hot tub. Of course, this must be juxtaposed against balmy British Columbia, where some candidates declared using their local golf club and purchasing umbrellas.

## **Discussion**

Choosing an optimal media mix is difficult for private sector experts (e.g., Rotfield 2007). So it must be next to impossible for the “local amateurs” in electoral districts (Carty 1991: 13) who face spending limits while trusting the national party with their money. On the one hand, serious candidates are thought to have strategies based on primary research data and to make extensive use of broadcast advertising (Brooks 2007, 355), reflecting the “vigorous, rich and rudely independent” local branches of a Canadian party (Carty 2002, 735). On the other, many hopeless candidates merely mimic the national party strategy, have few resources, and trudge forward without a local party district association (Sayers 1999). Many fringe party candidates may be nothing more

than names on a ballot. The reality is that every campaign operation tends to tedious administrative business.

Looking at the text entries in expenditure declarations can contextualize our understanding of the range of constituency campaigning. Furthermore, rather than relying on the Part 3a categories, new groupings could help identify trends in areas such as direct mail, telemarketing, Internet communications, ethnic media, party transfers and even dining out. Further evidence might be detected to assess the merits of what taxpayers subsidize, such as post-campaign victory parties (Stanbury 1991, 350 and 394). It seems peculiar that a parking fine (not to mention unidentifiable individuals, numbered companies, or a candidate's own business) can be publicly funded by tax-receipted contributions to political parties and through a partial reimbursement from the state.

The relationship between the national party headquarters and hundreds of candidate campaigns can also be monitored with these text data. The national organization has yet another opportunity to shape local media messages when neighbouring candidates collaborate on regional advertising (Preyra 1991). Election returns in 2006 point to such cooperation among constituency campaigns (particularly Liberals and Tories) and provide evidence of communications firms working with many of them. Cross (2004) has suggested that reforms are needed to counter such centralization, echoing issues raised by Epstein (1964) decades earlier, and Young et al. (2007) have warned that publicly subsidizing political parties may lead to a detachment from the grassroots. Even so, there is some need for central coordination. Parties are necessarily involved in many inter-election activities such as fundraising, recruitment and policy planning (Carty and Eagles 2004) and ultimately a political party's franchisees

need to be well-managed in order to run a viable national campaign (Lambert and Jensen 2007). The apprehension associated with Bill C-24's state subsidies is that centralized and professionalized operations supplant efforts to recruit and engage citizens as participants. The data summarized here indicate that party organizations that see votes as a revenue source may attempt to commandeer and privatize local campaigns to ensure the highest possible turnout of supporters.

While the increased flow of money from the state might stem declining turnout it could exacerbate diminishing citizen participation in the electioneering process itself. This is worth monitoring particularly if we accept the position that money and volunteer labour are the heart of a campaign organization (Stanbury 1991, 9; Carty et al. 2000, 173). Not only does paying staff result in more bureaucratic campaign organizations but, according to Carty (1991, 161-164), it is how the "central party apparatus might impose some order and discipline" locally. Some constituency operations hire talent, buy services and remunerate workers. Quantitative analysis across elections could establish the extent of professionalization, if the holiday interruption in 2006 increased its propensity, and if there is more party involvement during by-elections.

### **Conclusion**

This anthropological description of candidate spending behaviour provides an intimate level of detail that raises some issues for statistical research. The rationality of specific types of expenditures (not just using the Elections Canada categories) warrants a close look to identify which ones deliver the proverbial best bang for the buck. Such information would be particularly useful in competitive races where spending choices matter the most (Coyte and Landon 1989) and in minority government situations. This

could help validate practitioners' view that strategic decisions often matter more than volume (Brook 1991). Moreover it suggests that patterns of questionable spending, such as on family businesses, might be identified over multiple elections and inform legislators of expenditures that perhaps should not qualify for a publicly-funded rebate.

This article also indicates that a plethora of mundane tasks is the backbone of a candidate's campaign. This may involve opening a bank account, shredding documents, or sending flowers to a constituent. Local activists are also gradually embracing technological shifts such as e-commerce and are hiring business services such as telemarketing. There is therefore evidence that even as routine matters are handled by administrators, some of the more vibrant of Canada's constituency campaigns are using new technology, and select tasks are being outsourced to specialists. However there is scant evidence of specialized winter electioneering tactics or for that matter of significant associated hardships.

Efficiencies of scale and party unity—not just more votes—are sought when candidates buy the services of communications consultants and involve other area party candidates. This horizontal spending appears to be considerably less common than top-down party initiatives are. There is robust evidence of the interrelationship between political parties and their candidates which may be further stimulated by Bill C-24's public financing arrangements. Canada's federal political parties have a pecuniary incentive to standardize local electoral machinery even as their candidates cope with fewer volunteers. Scrutinizing supplier data is one way to monitor party centralization and the professionalization of constituency campaigning.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Acknowledgments: Thank you to Leslie Seidle of the Institute for Research on Public Policy and to the anonymous reviewers of an earlier version of this article for their helpful suggestions.
- <sup>2</sup> For instance communications suppliers were located electronically in the dataset using the search term “comm” (short for communications), but considerable data cleaning was required because many of the results—such as chambers of **commerce**, telephone **communications** and the Toronto Transit **Commission**—were extraneous compared to Flip **Communications & Stratégies**.
- <sup>3</sup> This was time consuming because despite requests Elections Canada would not provide a complete dataset.
- <sup>4</sup> A total of 1,634 candidates ran in 2006, with 237 representing one of 10 other parties (Animal Alliance Environment Voters, Canadian Action, Christian Heritage, Communist, First Peoples National Party, Libertarian, Marijuana, Marxist-Leninist, Progressive Canadian, Western Block) and 90 running as unaffiliated or independent.
- <sup>5</sup> That one candidate in York West (ON) hired a financial collection agency apparently for its call centre demonstrates the flexibility of businesses offering these services.
- <sup>6</sup> Of note in 2006 a placement agency for persons with disabilities received over \$10,000 from a Conservative in Edmonton.
- <sup>7</sup> According to their Web sites some of these suppliers offered roadside advertising such as large billboard structures, mini-billboards, mobile billboards, mobile light-up signs, or transit signs; other options included advertising in shopping malls, backlit posters, painted wall murals and airport advertising.
- <sup>8</sup> Using only the expense declarations it is difficult to detect what exactly was purchased. The 56 instances of candidates paying a \$15,000 sum to the Conservative Fund of Canada in 2006 were recorded in five different categories (other advertising, election surveys, other office, miscellaneous expenses, amounts not included in election expenses).
- <sup>9</sup> Of note in 2006 there was a case of customized seating billed for a quadriplegic candidate.
- <sup>10</sup> Concerns have been raised about “in and out” transfers from a candidate, particularly involving promotional funds for the BQ in 2000 (Marland, 2005) and the Conservative party in 2006 (Brennan, 2007), that circumvent spending regulations and aim to maximize post-campaign refunds.
- <sup>11</sup> A total of 70 different communications service providers were compiled after data cleaning: nine dealing with five or more candidates, two dozen working with two to four candidates, and 37 engaged with a single candidate. Only suppliers with a minimum \$500 expenditure and one of the following keywords were considered for inclusion: advert, campaign, comm, consult, contact, market, media, public, research, strat, voice, voter. A cursory review of the dozens of suppliers receiving less than \$5,000 indicates that they offered a similarly diverse range of services.
- <sup>12</sup> First Contact (2007) has billed itself as being “the leading Canadian supplier of call centre services to Liberal candidates and office-holders” and had a Web site peppered with testimonials from Liberal campaign managers.
- <sup>13</sup> Only one of these 71 candidates declared giving Touché Media Marketing less than \$9,500 (Marland, 2005).
- <sup>14</sup> Determined in part by reviewing online candidate profiles (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006).
- <sup>15</sup> Only four of the first 38 federal campaigns were held in winter: January 1874, February 1887, March 1891 and February 1980, with some others held at winter’s onset (mid-December 1917 and early December 1921) or near its end (late March in 1940 and 1958).
- <sup>16</sup> Turnout in 2006 increased by 3.8 per cent over the 2004 general election. Interestingly, the subsequent Quebec provincial election of March 2007 was affected by at least one party leader developing a cold, leaders’ travel plans being interrupted by winter storms, a seniors’ services company offering free rides to the polls, and some retirees relocating to Florida until summer.
- <sup>17</sup> Flanagan (2007: 231) states that the Conservative leader’s tour slowed down during this period but that the party did not trust the Liberals enough to adopt a “truce”.

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