

Permanent Campaigning in Canada

..... Edited by Alex Marland,
Thierry Giasson, and
Anna Lennox Esselment



UBC Press · Vancouver · Toronto

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THIERRY GIASSON AND ALEX MARLAND, SERIES EDITORS

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Permanent campaigning in Canada / edited by Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson, and Anna Lennox Esselment.

(Communication, strategy, and politics, ISSN 2368-1047)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-0-7748-3448-3 (hardcover). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3450-6 (PDF)

ISBN 978-0-7748-3451-3 (EPUB) – ISBN 978-0-7748-3452-0 (Kindle)

1. Political campaigns – Canada. 2. Politics, Practical – Canada. 3. Communication in politics – Canada. 4. Canada – Politics and government. I. Giasson, Thierry, author, editor II. Marland, Alexander J., author, editor III. Esselment, Anna Lennox, author, editor IV. Series: Communication, strategy, and politics

JL193.P47 2017

324.70971

C2017-901042-5

C2017-901043-3

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens

Set in Scala and Minion by Artegraphica Design Co. Ltd.

Copy editor: Lana Okerlund

Proofreader: Dianne Tiefensee

Indexer: Noeline Bridge

Cover designer: David Drummond

UBC Press

The University of British Columbia

2029 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

www.ubcpress.ca

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Maclean's *National Leaders' Debate*,
CITY studio complex, Toronto, August 6, 2015

“The *Fair Elections Act* turns out to be full of surprises. One of the things it did was allow you to extend the election campaign to 11 weeks and prorate expenses to match. Did you have this kind of long election campaign in mind for two years?”

–Paul Wells, *national leaders' debate moderator*

“Everybody knew an election would be on. The other parties were out campaigning. It's very simple: if we are going to be in an election campaign, we should be under the rules of the *Election Act*, not using parliamentary resources but using resources that our party raises.”

–Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, *Conservative leader*

“So why were you putting up 24/7 [PMO videos] on your website, Mr. Harper?”

–Justin Trudeau, *Liberal leader*

Source: Maclean's. 2015. “Tale of the Tape: Read a Full Transcript of Maclean's Debate.” August 6. <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/tale-of-the-tape-read-a-full-transcript-of-macleans-debate/>.

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1

Welcome to Non-Stop Campaigning

..... *Alex Marland, Anna Lennox Esselment,
and Thierry Giasson*

Per·ma·nent cam·paign

noun

Electioneering throughout governance, which often involves leveraging public resources. This is more prevalent with fixed-date election legislation because all political parties maintain a state of election readiness that builds as the election approaches. Non-stop campaigning is most pronounced in the final year of a four-year cycle, during by-elections, and during the uncertainty of minority government when the possibility of a sudden election campaign is ever-present.

(from the glossary)

The requirements of election campaigns were once viewed as quite separate from the responsibilities of governing. In the early to mid-twentieth century, the separation between campaigning and governing was relatively clear. In large part, political parties had a solid membership base on which they could rely for votes and electioneering from one campaign to the next. News cycles were long, and political parties provided newspaper scribes with inside scoops with a quid pro quo expectation of favourable treatment. Campaign funds were secured through party bagmen, and local campaigns were controlled by party bosses. The lubricants of patronage and pork-barrelling kept party machines running. These party attachments began to unravel in the latter half of the twentieth century, and political elites were faced with more difficult terrain. Political scandals, particularly in the United States, gave voters and journalists legitimate reason to be skeptical of decision

makers. Political correspondents, adhering to a new watchdog philosophy in political reporting, became more critical of parties and government. By extension, journalists and citizens became less deferential to authority. The media engaged in aggressive investigations of government and reported on any misconduct or suspicion of wrongdoing. Stricter campaign rules and public tendering processes were installed to reflect the changing political ethics. A philosophy of catering to party supporters was no longer possible without also considering public opinion polling to gauge voter sentiment. Maintaining a high public approval rating improved the chances of re-election; however, staying on top of the polls required calculated effort akin to the type of planning demanded by an election campaign.

Nowadays, political parties are embroiled in constant electioneering – a non-stop competitive mindset to win the onslaught of media battles, to raise funds, to persuade public opinion, to push an agenda, and to generally maintain a state of election readiness. It has become the norm for political parties that have just won an election to carry on as though the campaign never stopped. Moreover, they do not shy away from taking advantage of the multitude of publicly funded levers at their disposal. Political leaders and strategists have always done this, but not with such ferocity or calculated purpose.

This book explores the phenomenon and industry of permanent campaigning in Canada. We lack information about “when permanent campaigning began in this country, how pervasive it has become within government and how permanent ‘the permanent campaign’ style of governing will be” (Thomas 2013, 66). We even lack a strong understanding of what the concept encompasses.

What Is Permanent Campaigning?

It is commonly understood that the first priority of any government is to secure re-election (Benoit 2006, 178), and leaders have such a penchant for conflating governing with campaigning that one becomes indistinguishable from the other. While political actors have always sought to leverage their office to secure re-election, the concept that we are concerned with here originated in the 1970s in the United States. Political consultant Patrick Caddell believed that it was a mistake to divorce politics from government, because those in power tend to forget the reasons why they were elected. Apolitical government results in the enactment of policies that grate against the wishes of the public and make re-election more difficult. Instead, Caddell

insisted that “governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign” (Blumenthal 1980, 39). With that simple thesis, the concept of governing with the intensity of an official election campaign was born.

Permanent campaigning and its many synonyms – constant, continuous, perpetual, non-stop, inter-election, and never-ending campaigning, to name some – describe a mindset that efforts to win the next election begin immediately after election day. This is fuelled by a desire to achieve positive media coverage that treats all manner of political issues as mini-contests with winners and losers. Public opinion polls, by-elections, legislative votes, policy announcements – they all must be won as though the outcome of the next election is at stake. At a deeper level, the concept refers to political actors maximizing all available resources to achieve their electoral goals, and in particular to members of the political government accessing public resources. In this sense, permanent campaigning refers to an approach to governance whereby the partisan elites who control the government apply strategies and techniques usually found in a campaign setting to the process of governing itself. The thinking is that to implement a political agenda and to be re-elected, it is imperative that the government party be seen to be more often on the winning side.

Concern about this phenomenon is warranted when public administration is entwined with electioneering. Governing is combined with disciplined political communication to the point that it can be difficult to discern what is apolitical, what is political, and what is partisan. The use of public resources for government advertising, branding, direct voter contact, social media, and public opinion research warrants scrutiny. In particular, there is growing reliance on – and influence of – political staff within government, and a creeping politicization of the public service the longer that a party is in office. All of this raises questions about the democratic nature of government.

The study of permanent campaigning and its effects on American politics blossomed after Caddell’s view for maintaining power began to take shape. One point of scholarly intrigue was the observation that presidents increasingly sought to persuade congressional representatives of their policy goals by appealing directly to the American electorate for support (Jones 1998; Kernell 1997). President Franklin Roosevelt’s fireside chats in the 1930s and 1940s were an early example of this. Rallying the voting public to build support for presidential legislative initiatives or foreign policy operations became commonplace, particularly once television was a stock item in most

American households. A more recent illustration was President Obama appearing as a regular guest on late-night entertainment shows, news stations, and other media platforms when his health-care reform bill was making its way through Congress (Baum 2012, 183). Other academics observed that pollsters, armed with the latest opinion research, are frequent visitors to the White House, demonstrating the increasing dependence on – and weight given to – public views by the executive when making decisions (Bowman 2000; Murray and Howard 2002). The extent to which party expenditures are set aside to pay for polling data solidified the suspicion that the executive is keenly interested in the various opinions of American voters (Tenpas and McCann 2007).

A further area of research is the role played by political staff in government. The Office of Political Affairs was created in 1980 by President Jimmy Carter, to whom Caddell's advice was offered. The office's explicit purpose is to provide political, partisan advice to the president. In large part it is staffed by strategists, consultants, polling experts, and other political staff charged with the responsibility for providing "assistance in mid-term elections and the early planning for the president's re-election campaign" (Tenpas 1996, 512). It keeps close tabs on issues that arise in the various states so that the president is apprised of political developments. Due to the throng of publicity that accompanies a president, another angle for analysis is the way that presidential touring is planned. The White House crafts the president's travel schedule in a manner designed to bolster public support for policy initiatives and to target large, competitive states (Cook 2002; Doherty 2012). A further area of interest is the relationship between constant campaigning and political communication. This includes an emphasis on carefully crafted messages that are deliberately targeted to different segments of the electorate (Burton and Shea 2010; Johnson 2011). Using numerous forms of media, the political executive can improve its ability to direct and manage its messages. In short, there is an increasing propensity for political elites to take Caddell's prescription to heart and to practise an innovative way of politicking and governing in the United States.

Understanding permanent campaigning also requires recognizing what it is not. As both a mindset and a political context, it should not be confused with marketing. Political marketing frames the permanent campaign; it defines the polling, communication, and policy initiatives that parties engage in during the inter-election period. Market research carried out between elections, both by government and partisan formations, dictates how con-

tinuous campaigning is undertaken. These data provide information to set the agenda of issues, help segment and target receptive voters, and inform communications strategy. Political marketing sets the objectives for which the permanent campaign is designed and implemented.

Permanent campaigning should also not be equated solely to political communication. As many chapters of this book demonstrate, persuasion is a central tenet, employing such strategic tools as advertising, speeches, image management, online presences, policy announcements, leader's tours, and media relations. However, the reach of permanent campaigning extends to other political phenomena that are not directly related to communication activities. These include the centralization of executive decision making, the politicization of public administration, and the instrumentalization of parliamentary rules and institutions for partisan and electoral purposes. Therefore, both political marketing and political communication are closely associated to the concept of permanent campaigning, but should rather be understood as contributing factors to its relevant success. The subject matter of this book is concerned with the contextual environment of perpetual election preparedness and with the institutionalization of strategic actions in the inter-election period – whether political, marketing, or communication in nature – that at one time were exclusive to the official election period.

Permanent Campaigning in Canada: Conceptual Nuances and Distinctions

In Canada, Justin Trudeau has arguably been in a perpetual state of campaigning since before he became leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and ever since he became prime minister. Political commentator Andrew Coyne observes as much, writing that “the governing style of Justin Trudeau’s government is coming into focus. It is one part not being Stephen Harper, one part symbolic gesture, one part wriggling out of campaign promises, and one part saying yes to everybody. You thought the Harper government was all about the permanent campaign? Get used to it” (Coyne 2016). The list of politicking is so long that it is confusing what constitutes legitimate government business and what is about image and persuasion with an eye on winning votes, and whether there can be any separation. Prime Minister Trudeau participated in a live Q and A with citizens that was televised on CBC. He flew with an entourage to a state dinner in Washington, DC, and reciprocated by hosting President Obama. His cabinet held retreats at re-

sorts in New Brunswick and Alberta, and the government has paid British consultants to counsel ministers about how to deliver on election promises (Dyer 2016). He has instructed Liberal MPs to focus on getting re-elected by delivering top-quality services to constituents and being good grassroots communicators. As one MP put it, “It’s got to be all about helping people ... That’s where the votes come from” (Rana 2016). Supporters might assert that these and many other actions embody a democratic spirit of accessibility and transparency and are legitimate government business. Detractors might reason that it is mostly about spin and media management and prioritizing the needs of the political class. We argue that it all constitutes permanent campaigning.

Prior to the Trudeau Liberal era of governance, the federal Conservative Party was an aggressive adopter of marketing practices and methodically deployed government resources to further its needs. A strong argument could be made that the practice of non-stop campaigning emerged with force in Canada during the minority governance era of 2004 to 2011. All political parties were cognizant that an election could occur at any time, and this spurred a greater degree of preparedness for a potential campaign. This was especially true for the Conservatives. Harper and his team understood the importance of being prepared for electoral warfare at any moment, and they were in power alongside major developments in social media, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. The party implemented a disciplined and fused style of communication messages and resources in its bid for election, to stay in power, and to win the next election with a majority of seats. The ferocity of permanent campaigning in this country may therefore well be related to Harper’s tenure as leader of the Conservative Party from 2004 to 2015 and as prime minister for nearly a decade. That period is thus a formidable source of data. We are also in the early throngs of permanent campaigning by interest groups and other political actors. In Canada as elsewhere, the delineation between electioneering and governing was clearer before the prominence of opinion surveys, before the advent of twenty-four-hour news channels and digital media, and before the relentless effort to win the hearts and minds of narrow pools of floating voters.

Yet there is other evidence that perpetual campaigning extends to other political parties. There is a history in this country of partisans seeking to exploit the perks of office for political-electoral gain through patronage, gerrymandering, changed election rules, advertising, buying votes with

budget goodies, and so on. We need only look at the Liberal administrations that immediately preceded the Harper Conservatives to illustrate that permanent campaigning is an art form in which many Canadian political elites have become master artisans. The Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities (Gomery Commission) identified a number of themes within the upper echelon of the Chrétien/Martin Liberal governments that set the scene for the advent of permanent campaigning. Most notably, normal reporting processes were bypassed to award bogus advertising contracts to Liberal-connected advertising agencies, which was at the heart of the sponsorship scandal. The Gomery report enumerated a number of far-reaching partisan activities within government, ranging from senior government officials exploiting their influence, to the alignment of government communication with party messaging (Public Works and Government Services Canada 2005). Evidence also exists that parliamentarians engage in permanent campaigning at the most microscopic levels. The circulation of a message from a New Democratic Party MP's parliamentary email account inviting supporters to participate in a weekly phone bank and weekend door knocking is a case in point. An independent MP criticized that error in judgment thusly:

The Parliament of Canada is not a partisan institution. It's the legislative branch of the Government of Canada. It is paid for by all taxpayers, not taxpayers that support a particular candidate or a particular party. So, to deploy taxpayers' resources to recruit individuals to an imminent political campaign is inappropriate and if I was a taxpayer, which I am, I'm offended when my tax dollars are used by individuals to promote partisan causes that I don't support. (Rana 2015)

Complaints about how elected officials exploit public resources for their own political gain are common in Canada, particularly as an official election approaches.

The practice of permanent campaigning appears to be connected to the speeding up of political communication. Whatever the reasons, it is now accepted that "the frenzied, headline-grabbing approach of the election period" is "carried over into the governing process" in this country (Thomas 2013, 66). Public administration scholar Donald Savoie (2010, 96) summarizes

the many factors that contribute to permanent campaigning as a byzantine mix of political marketing practices, including

the new media; the blogification of the media; political reporting; negative campaigning; the rise of political consultants and professional campaigners and spin specialists; single issue movements; the use of focus groups to review policy issues; the larger and more senior partisan political staff in ministerial offices; the staff and increased resources allocated to members of Parliament; the growing number of swing voters and those unwilling to identify with a political party; increases in spending on government advertising and public opinion surveys; the development of a voter data base; and spending restrictions during elections [*sic*] campaigns but none outside the campaign period.

A number of developments have brought forth such a frenzied atmosphere. None of these are attributable to any one political party, but rather are an outcome of broader trends.

The first development that we observe is the intensifying concentration of power at the centre of Canadian politics, namely the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and its supporting agencies (Marland 2016; Savoie 1999).¹ A second development is the greater use of political marketing techniques by Canadian political parties (Delacourt 2016; Flanagan 2014; Marland et al. 2012). Most parties and their strategists realize the advantage provided by adopting sophisticated sales and marketing practices in today's competitive political environment. Changes in political communication are a third development. Sticking to a script and staying on message has been a standard campaign orthodoxy for many years now. With the twenty-four-hour news cycle and the advent of social media, disciplined communication practices both on the campaign and in government have never been more important or harder to manage (Elmer et al. 2012; Marland et al. 2014). A fourth turn of events was changes to legislation overseeing political party finance and fundraising rules, in 2003 and 2011.² The reforms dramatically affected the way in which Canadian parties seek and spend money. A banning of corporate and union donations coupled with the phasing-out of public subsidies means that parties adept at raising small amounts from a large number of citizens are better positioned to fund their elections. The Conservative Party mastered this new method first (Flanagan 2014), but the other major parties gained

ground. For some time, this was a formidable position of strength for the Conservatives, who had both the funds and gravitas to deploy negative advertising to “de-brand” opponents outside of the election writ period, when usual rules over electoral communication expenses do not apply (Flanagan 2012; Rose 2012). With the Liberals now in power, the ability to fundraise from the seat of government has changed hands. The fifth development we observe was the advent of fixed-date election legislation. This effectively shortened the normal electoral cycle for a majority government to four years from the constitutionally allowed five years. The first minister reserves the right to seek the early dissolution of the legislature but is constrained by the publicly known scheduled date of the next election. This shift puts political parties in a state of heightened election readiness, particularly in an election year. The situation is even more frenzied during a minority Parliament. Equally, in 2015, the intensity of pre-election campaigning pushed Prime Minister Harper to set in motion one of the longest official campaigns in Canadian history, ostensibly to constrain third parties’ ability to advertise and to bleed the resources of his opponents.

These five developments – prime ministerial power, political marketing strategies, disciplined communication, party finance changes, and fixed-date elections – are not the only factors at play. For instance, the growth in hyperpartisanship is a contributing factor, as are changing communications technologies, successive minority governments, and parties’ obsession with message cohesiveness. When considering these and other variables, we can see how the contours of the permanent campaign have taken shape both within and outside of government in this country.

One need only look at news coverage of Canadian politics and government for evidence of permanent campaigning. In the executive branch, there is a constant stream of news stories about communication management. For instance, social media posts of text, photos, and video developed by the PMO that present the prime minister in a positive light avail of the government communications infrastructure and are recirculated by the party. Members of cabinet make announcements at pseudo-events that look similar to campaign-style events. More ministerial regional offices have been created around the country. Ministers travel as part of consultation processes, and cabinet meetings are periodically held outside of the capital. Party officials and government officers who are publicly off message with leadership are sanctioned and dismissed, just as candidates are axed with alarming frequency during a campaign for past social media indiscretions.

These are in public view; many other ways of manipulating public resources go on behind the scenes or are discovered years later. One little-known example is the revelation that the Government of Canada paid over \$8,000 in hospitality expenses for former Australian prime minister John Howard to spend three days in Ottawa, during which time he met with government officials – though ostensibly the reason for his visit was to speak at the Manning Centre Conference that is mostly attended by Conservative partisans (Smith 2016). Others are hidden in plain sight, such as the Ontario Liberal government spending nearly \$600,000 on advertising during the federal election campaign to promote a stronger pension plan scheme, a topic that Premier Kathleen Wynne advocated while stumping with Trudeau (Canadian Press 2016). We are left to wonder how many other activities occur without public knowledge.

A permanent campaigning mentality extends to the legislative branch, where MPs avail of their franking privilege to distribute partisan mailings, including during by-elections. Political parties maintain parliamentary research bureaus – known as the Conservative Resource Group, Liberal Research Bureau, and NDP Caucus Services – that receive funding to support the caucus but in turn conduct opposition research and coordinate party messaging. When an election is called, the bureaus dissolve and become party-funded war rooms. The New Democrats created satellite party offices with parliamentary funds and allows its parliamentary staff to draw on their overtime to continue to collect a paycheque when they take time off to volunteer for by-elections. Partisan activities have been an essential component of a senator's work, so it follows that senators have billed the Senate for travel expenses for attending events where they prop up their party and urge political donations. In the legislature, all political parties attempt to exploit existing rules and collectively make decisions on legislative committees that favour their own circumstance or attempt to constrain their opponents' campaigning and resources. Parliamentary debate exercises strict party discipline and message control, even when leaders publicly profess otherwise. Legislation and convention are altered to enhance the government's partisan advantage. At times, the government refuses to produce requested documents that could derail its agenda. As an election approaches, government bills are introduced that form the basis of political messaging. "One could ultimately say that there is the legislative agenda, and then there is the spin agenda, or the election agenda ... I believe the driving push within the House of Commons from a legislative and just a debate perspective is

going to be focused solely on the election,” remarked the Liberal House leader in early 2015 (Aiello 2015). Likewise, parliamentarians introduce private members’ bills so that they have something to campaign on.

Permanent campaigning in government is also marked by increasing numbers of communications personnel. Government advertising is a tool of mass persuasion that blurs partisan messaging. Websites promote visuals that convey a cohesive brand that makes it difficult to differentiate party from state. Meticulously planned pseudo-events advance the governing party’s communication priorities. Public servants, including government scientists, who publicly speak their minds do so at their own risk. Government departments are encouraged by senior mandarins to use social media to promote policy using the governing party’s sloganeering and policy commitments. To name one example of this coordination, in 2014, a leaked email authored by an assistant deputy minister of finance asked contacts across government to “re-tweet the Department of Finance tweets from @financecanada on the announcement over the following 72 hours. Most of our tweets will contain the hashtags #StrongFamilies ou #Famillesfortes” (Canadian Press 2014). As the election approaches, budget goodies are dispensed, from big-ticket pan-Canadian initiatives to government pork for local community ventures. Languishing policy issues are neutralized with promises to take future action.

Early signals from the Trudeau government suggest that hyperpartisanship, and by extension permanent campaigning, are no longer in vogue. Some of the Harper government’s most acrimonious forms of communication and governance are being undone. During that period, media relations were confrontational and governance was a highly disciplined machine with a partisan messaging mentality. Journalists had reduced access to most members of cabinet and fewer scrum opportunities. They experienced delayed responses to inquiries and access to information requests. They were directed to submit questions by email, which prompted a controlled electronic response, sometimes without regard for what was asked. News conferences were replaced with photo opportunities only and with seated Q-and-A-style events on a stage with a friendly handpicked moderator. When Prime Minister Harper did take questions from journalists, only those picked by the PMO were invited, and even then only a handful of questions were accepted. Information about high-level meetings, such as with premiers, was announced after the fact, so journalists could report only what was allegedly discussed. Digital media acted as a powerful method to bypass traditional

news media and communicate directly with supporters and stakeholders. Meanwhile, the fourth estate grew dependent on the contrived electronic information even as it bristled at the practice. Time will tell whether Trudeau's sunny ways can penetrate the forces of political communication that have beset all of those who have previously headed the PMO. It is one thing for sunlight to be a disinfectant when first occupying the highest public office; it is quite another matter the longer that one occupies that office. Permanent campaigning in the Liberal government is prone to mount as controversy ensues, as the list of political enemies grows, as poll results suffer, and especially as the next election campaign approaches.

A permanent campaigning mindset is most evident among political parties, irrespective of leader. Major planks of an election manifesto are released long before the official campaign. Perpetual fundraising occurs through electronic media appeals and database management. The strategy of micro-targeting subsegments of electors in communication carries over into the development of public policy. Centralized training modules are offered in preparation for the next election, and candidates are rigorously screened. Nominated candidates begin campaigning months if not years before the signing of the writ. "It was almost four years ago when the last election [took place] and I haven't stopped," remarked a Liberal candidate planning to contest an electoral district whose boundaries were adjusted under redistribution (quoted in Lord and Rana 2015). Electioneering was so pronounced in 2015 that it was pretense for that year's extraordinarily long seventy-eight-day official campaign period, as the exchange between Harper and Trudeau in the epigraph on p. v serves to illustrate.

The activities of interest groups in this environment are better described as constant communication. There is increased coordination of political advocacy, more government monitoring of protests, and growing susceptibility to leaked information that can discredit a group's perceived legitimacy. The threat of left-wing super PACs (the American term for political action committees that pool their resources) and union-funded pre-campaign advertising were other reasons why Harper headed to the polls early. The one area that has, to date, been hands-off is the judicial branch. The Conservative prime minister's unprecedented public volley against the chief justice of the Supreme Court, whom he alleged made an inappropriate phone call to the minister of justice, may be an isolated case. Or it may indicate that a permanent campaigning mentality leads to testing new boundaries.

While there is ample evidence of permanent campaigning in Canada, there is minimal theorizing about the concept in the Canadian context, which has a unique combination of institutional factors, principally the concentration of power at the apex of government combined with stringent party discipline. Public administration scholar Peter Aucoin spent much of his last academic efforts on the New Political Governance (NPG) model (2011, 2012). The NPG concept effectively captures the changing dynamics of core executive operations in light of new media pressures, the imperative placed on strategic communication, an enhanced decision-making role for political staff, the demand for transparency, and the hyperpartisan/political polarization between parties and within the electorate. Aucoin's model emphasizes the political and partisan aspect of party government, which provides some insight as to why a political party would be both susceptible to and welcoming of the permanent campaign. His intent was to more purposefully combine observations and analyses about the political/electoral imperative of parties with scholarship on the nature of public administration. This extended the theory of executive dominance to its logical conclusion in what is now a media-driven marketplace that requires a deft command of electoral preparedness, political communication, and governance. The NPG model thus sets out a useful framework for greater scrutiny of permanent campaigning, particularly in the section devoted to governance and the permanent campaign. But the model may not apply as readily to all areas under study here, and it holds greater relevance for a government that has been in office for a while than for one freshly installed.

A recent collection edited by Kirsten Kozolanka (2014) about what is termed "the publicity state" offers the most direct intersection between the permanent campaign and government communication, mostly considered through advertising expenditures. Its contribution relies more on its critical and normative approach to the subject matter, and less on an analysis of empirical, data-driven cases. Another recent contribution, *The Permanent Campaign: New Media, New Politics* (Elmer, Langlois, and McKelvey 2012) also reflects on the concept. Its authors investigate more narrowly the notion from the angle of "networked political communication," where transformations in online technologies impact the way political actors, news media, and citizens alike take part in a hybrid, accelerated, and partisan campaigning process. As well, Tom Flanagan's *Winning Power: Canadian Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) addresses permanent campaigning more

directly, with an entire chapter dedicated to the concept. Building the book's argument from his past experiences as a Conservative campaign strategist, he brings a finer conceptual definition and details the practice's implications for governance and electoral preparedness in Canadian politics. This includes the centralization of operations, message discipline, pre-writ negative advertising, and obsession with fundraising, which have become core preoccupations of political parties. *Winning Power* mostly focuses on parties' electioneering efforts and somewhat less on the use of governmental institutions, policy design, and communication practices as tools of permanent campaigning by governments. As with other contributions, the emphasis tends to be on changes within party politics or governance, rather than on permanent campaigning's relationship with public administration.

The concept of the permanent campaign has also been introduced and studied in volumes published in the *Communication, Strategy, and Politics* series of UBC Press. Chapters in both *Political Marketing in Canada* and *Political Communication in Canada* contribute to the definition of this reality within the Canadian context. Contributions in the first collection use political marketing theories to describe how market research and communication activities (such as government communication and advertising or partisan use of social media) are integrated in strategic designs aimed at ensuring electoral success. Anna Lennox Esselment's (2014) work provides a rich review of the literature on permanent campaigning and describes how, from 2006 on, Conservatives in Ottawa had modified four features of government communication (professionalization, centralization, polling, and partisan polarization) to bring a permanent-campaign ethos in governance.

In the absence of a general theoretical model, our approach here is that permanent campaigning comprises five interrelated strategic objectives. These are carried during the inter-election context by political parties to improve electoral outcomes: communication control, resource exploitation, redefinition of norms, database management, and coalition building (Table 1.1). This framework highlights the hybrid nature of permanent campaigning in Canada, which combines older and newer types of strategic objectives undertaken through older and newer forms of electioneering. These and other activities are dotted throughout the book; in Chapter 16 we return to them, offering examples of electioneering in the lead-up to the 2015 election call. We believe that they tell a story of the institutionalization of a permanent electioneering ethos, combined with the broad scope of inter-election tactics that have been implemented in recent years.

TABLE 1.1

Strategic objectives of permanent campaigning in Canada

Component	Description	Examples of inter-election activities
1 Communication control	Communication practices that at one time were confined to the official campaign period but are now routinely practised in the inter-election period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate screening and training • Direct marketing with supporters • Fewer opportunities for going off script • Information constraints • Political advertising • Tighter media protocols • Unforgiving message discipline
2 Resource exploitation	State resources are leveraged for campaigning purposes between elections, in particular to support new approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government advertising and polling • More communications personnel • Partisan mailings through MPs' offices • Politicization of public administration • Satellite offices • Touring and pseudo-events
3 Redefinition of norms	Attempts are made by political elites to circumvent or change rules and norms to accommodate the practice of permanent campaigning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altered conventions or legislation • Fusion of party and government messaging and visuals • Ignoring normal processes • Discrediting critics, libel suits • PMO digital media production
4 Database management	Fundraising and data mining are key roles for the extra-parliamentary party operations as a means to drive agendas throughout the parliamentary mandate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email fundraising • Information collection about electors • Political marketing research, segmentation, and microtargeting
5 Coalition building	Governing party's willingness to engage with or court particular stakeholders, groups, or constituents – while ostracizing opponents – is increasingly tied to its larger electoral goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals to select subsegments of the electorate while ignoring others • Mobilization of supporters • Monitoring of protests

Permanent Campaigning and Democracy

Before turning to the potential implications for Canadian democracy, and to set up an assessment of what can be done to address concerns, we must consider institutional arrangements. As indicated, changes in information and communication technologies are responsible for hurtling forward the political cycle. The unprecedented connectivity of political actors and citizens is having profound implications for political life and government business. The exponential effect of the volume and speed of information transfer is too profound to discuss here, as are the implications for traditional media (but see Elmer et al. 2012; Marland et al. 2014; Marland 2016). Suffice it to say that the volume and speed of information transfer are responsible for the intensification of political advocacy and obsessive issues management.

The electoral system is a static institutional consideration that affects the way that permanent campaigning is carried out. A prime minister has little incentive to distribute pork or travel to ridings that are firmly held by incumbents, especially members of opposition parties. However, there is an enormous impetus to visit battleground ridings where a seat is at risk of being lost or a gain is possible, particularly in the period surrounding by-election campaigns. The winner-takes-all feature of the single member plurality system requires only a minimum winning coalition. Majority governments have been formed with less than 40 percent of the national vote, meaning that policy proposals can be advanced even if a majority of Canadians are opposed. The importance of fixed-date election legislation is to raise political parties' consciousness of a pending campaign. The rule itself is not always relevant given that first ministers do not necessarily abide by it and because minority Parliaments will almost certainly collapse beforehand.

Voter behaviour is a further consideration. The best predictor of voter behaviour is partisanship. In Canada, a decline in durable partisanship began in earnest in the 1960s and 1970s, and today this country has a comparatively greater number of flexible partisans than its US counterpart (Clarke et al. 1979; Clarke et al. 2009). Flexible partisans are citizens who lean towards identifying with one party, but are more susceptible than durable partisans to short-term factors, such as issues and leadership, and tend to switch their vote from one election to another. The decline in party memberships is connected with the rise of partisan flexibility, as well as with the decline in Canadians' deference to institutions, leaders, and elites generally. Because parties have shrinking pools of hard and fast partisans to rely on, the need

to identify supporters and to assemble coalitions of voters is increasingly important (Flanagan 2014; Gidengil 2012). This means that parties have to not only look after their base, but also reach out to floating voters, a segment whose composition changes from one election to the next.

Election and political financing regulations have a profound influence on the way that permanent campaigning is carried out. Because these rules shape activities during the official campaign, by extension they influence how that campaigning persists. Among the most influential is the leader's veto over candidate nominations, which makes all local campaigns flow through the upper echelon of the party and is the basis for exacting message discipline. It is doubtful that a party leader's inner circle truly relinquished this power after the passage of the *Reform Act*, in effect as of the 42nd Parliament, which stipulates that regional agents must sign a candidate's nomination papers. Another Canadian practice of significance is the *Canada Elections Act* provision that electors' contact information from the National Register of Electors be regularly provided to political parties and MPs. This forms the basis for database marketing and non-stop fundraising. Limits on campaign spending, which are particularly rigid for third parties, make pre-writ advertising a necessary practice for well-funded organizations. Strict annual donation limits encourage political parties to raise money every single year, not just in election years. A former member of the Harper PMO describes the pre-writ situation as a period when "there are no spending limits, no advertising limits, no polling limits, no blackout periods, and no one has to determine what is or is not an election expense ... All of the work that has gone into developing the *Canada Elections Act* over the years to limit the influence of the almighty dollar goes out the window in this extended pre-writ period" (Carson 2014). That a prime minister would seek refuge in the regulations of an extraordinarily long official campaign speaks volumes about the practice of pre-election politicking across a wide spectrum of political interests.

As indicated, a further institutional consideration is the clout of the executive branch of government over the legislative branch. The centre of government is a compilation of influential political actors who work in concert with public servants in central agencies. Cabinet and powerful cabinet committees, such as Treasury Board and Parliamentary Affairs, work in concert with the PMO. So does the Agenda and Results Committee (formerly Operations), which we note that the Trudeau government further renamed as Agenda, Results and Communications three months into office to integrate

strategic communications functions. Political directives flow to the Privy Council Office (PCO) and the Treasury Board Secretariat. All departments and agencies, boards, and commissions act as arms of the government, with the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Services and Procurement playing a more centralized and conformist role than the rest. These are overseen by ministers and their exempt political staff, who work in ministers' offices. Coordination of this monolith must be balanced with the political executive enjoying the continued support of the government party's caucus and, more broadly, a majority of MPs.

Members of the PMO and PCO, alongside ministers and their staff, face the unenviable challenge of mobilizing the public service. Increasingly, this involves a whole-of-government approach to public administration that unites departmental resources under a shared programming umbrella, such as the Canada 150 celebrations. The PMO and ministers issue directives via the government whip to ensure that MPs are mouthpieces who promote desired messages and vote in synchronized fashion. However, there is more two-way communication with caucus than people appreciate. A prime minister who ignores caucus risks losing power, as happened with Jean Chrétien; one who provides a critical mass with active roles in governance gains a stronghold over the party, as with Stephen Harper and his caucus advisory committee system (Wilson 2015).

There are several potential democratic implications that are well worth considering. First and foremost, partisan misuse of public resources not only presents an ethical concern but in fact poses a significant risk to Canadian democracy. In the Westminster parliamentary system, a non-partisan public administration is considered as a safeguard to abuse of powers from elected officials and their political staff. Public servants should not be expected to become cogs in the marketing and public relations apparatus of a government's agenda. They act as impartial policy advisors to the governing elite, as protectors of the common good, and as service providers to citizens. They are also tasked with explaining to Canadians what government is doing and then implementing it. Therefore, the politicization of public administration may endanger the non-partisan nature of the public service necessary to safeguard the public interest. This speaks to an underlying premise that most political actors are less concerned with promoting broad democratic tenets, such as enhancing civic literacy, than they are with advancing their own interests and one-upping their opponents.

In the same vein, partisan use of public funds, particularly on government advertising and research, during the inter-election period goes against the spirit of electoral expense regulations. Political parties, both in government and opposition, circumvent electoral regulations by engaging in persuasive communication spending aimed at conditioning public opinion for the next electoral cycle. Canadians are exposed to pre-electoral advertising, often in the guise of government information campaigns destined officially at selling the policies and programs of the party in power. Such spending works around the regulatory framework regarding election expenses to the benefit of the party in power. Bans on partisan advertising outside of the official electoral campaign and a redefinition of the period under which expenses – both for research and communication – are considered as electoral in nature have been considered in other jurisdictions as effective mechanisms to ensure the integrity of electoral regulation frameworks. Early indications are that these are the sorts of reforms that may transpire under the Trudeau government.

Another set of complications arises with the concentration of power within the central agencies of government. This centralization of decision-making processes within the prime minister's close guard diminishes the role of individual elected representatives from the governing party. In the disciplined communication context of the permanent campaign, government MPs act as both docile supporters expected to vote along party lines and as customer service agents who promote policies and programs to their constituents. Concentration of power within the executive also dilutes the legitimacy of Parliament and its elected members as core actors of the legislative process. Recent governments have limited parliamentary debate over policies, introduced mammoth omnibus bills or budget legislation containing hidden hyperpartisan provisions and regulations, and made information less accessible for policy evaluation in parliamentary committees. This suggests that cooperation, moderation, and negotiation in the legislative process are often sacrificed.

Finally, as the permanent campaign is carried under the guides of political marketing principles, it is aimed at aiding parties to assemble a minimum winning coalition of specific segments of targeted voters. During the inter-election period, government officials and opposition parties cater to the narrow interests and needs of the voters that they court to win the next election. Interest representation is therefore limited, and political responsiveness is

calculated in ways that were not possible prior to the age of data analytics and narrowcasting.

This raises the spectre of permanent campaigning as an insidious phenomenon. In the United States, political parties can mobilize to shut down the government until political compromise is worked out in Congress and with the executive branch. In Canada, the fusion of the executive and legislative branches has other implications, including the ability of the prime minister (via the governor general) to shut down the legislative branch. The government party has significant advantages over opponents because of the rich resources at its disposal and an ability to act without negotiating with the opposition parties. This authority is magnified in a majority government situation. Whether this results in peace, order, and good government is a matter of opinion.

The Structure of *Permanent Campaigning in Canada*

The chapters in this book address a number of democratic implications related to permanent campaigning in Canada. Our concluding chapter presents potential remedies to those issues. *Permanent Campaigning in Canada* aims to bridge a void in the Canadian literature by bringing together the different components of the permanent campaign (e.g., political marketing and election preparedness, political communication, governance) through data-driven, empirical case studies. Whereas past Canadian publications have used more segmented or narrow theoretical, epistemological, and methodological approaches to investigate the concept, this one offers an integrated perspective. It explores the permanent campaign through general lenses of how it is marketed, how it is communicated, and how it affects how Canadians are governed. An overarching research objective is to assess whether the advent of perpetual campaigning in the inter-election period has enhanced or diminished key features of democratic governance. The following key questions are considered:

- 1 To what extent are the tactics, tools, or channels used by political actors in Canada during governance the same or different than what occurs during the official election campaign period?
- 2 To what extent does permanent campaigning result in a more informed, engaged, or cynical citizenry in Canada?

- 3 What are the corresponding implications of permanent campaigning for political parties, the media, parliamentary government, and Canadian democracy?

Permanent Campaigning in Canada is positioned to test parts of the NPG model by closely examining different aspects of permanent campaigning in Canada, as well as to contribute to broader theorizing. It further develops and refines the five key strategic objectives that we associate it with – communication control, resource exploitation, redefining norms, database management, and coalition building – as they apply to the Canadian context. The book features contributions from a variety of scholars who offer fresh perspectives about the Canadian political marketplace.

The first section of the book deals with theoretical parameters. In Chapter 2, Jonathan Craft sets the groundwork for how a non-partisan public service ought to interact with its publicly accountable political masters. Steve Patten builds on this in Chapter 3 by cautioning about the democratic implications of political strategy and data analytics. Chapters in Parts 2 and 3 follow a common organizational format of reviewing theory, presenting a case study, and considering what it means for permanent campaigning in Canada. Part 2 is about permanent campaigning by political parties. In Chapter 4, Andrea Lawlor looks at the media's treatment of political party messaging. The use of digital media by parties during the permanent campaign is tackled next. Alex Marland and Maria Mathews examine how email communication is used for fundraising, while in Chapter 6, Thierry Giasson and Tamara Small look at the strategy behind the online communication of Canadian opposition parties. Chapter 7 by André Turcotte and Simon Vodrey complements that work by dissecting the role of Liberal Party pollsters during the inter-election period. The section is rounded out by David McGrane, who in Chapter 8 discusses the mindset of a constant state of election readiness that seized the New Democratic Party of Canada in recent years.

Part 3 is about governance. In Chapter 9, Philippe Lagassé considers the use of prerogative powers of the Crown and offers an analysis of the policy implications of Canada's fixed-date election law. Chapter 10 sees Denver McNeney and David Coletto test whether government advertising influences viewers' impressions of the governing party. This is followed by a