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## “Tory, Tory, Tory:” Leadership Rules and Electoral Dynamics in the 2017 Federal Conservative Race

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### Abstract

This paper explores the implications of leadership voting rules on the dynamics and outcome of the 2017 Conservative Party of Canada leadership race. It tests the relevance of four major organizational factors which have been advanced to explain the outcome of the May 2017 leadership race: a) relative candidate support in strong and marginal Conservative constituencies, compared with relatively non-competitive constituencies; b) endorsements by elected members of the federal CPC caucus; c) relative support by demographic composition of constituencies, as measured by degree of urbanization; d) relative capacity to consolidate support from other candidates on a provincial / regional and national level.

### Introduction

Party leaders wield disproportionate power within Westminster-style systems. Under Canadian election laws, leaders have had the right to authorize individual parliamentary candidacies since the 1970s. Their policies and images define the party in the public mind – for better or for worse. Leaders’ political styles determine the extent to which legislators or party members will influence the party’s policies and tactics, although leaders’ entourages have long played a significant role in managing election campaigns, and often, in running party organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Leadership selection processes can play an important role in party self-definition and renewal. They provide important opportunities for recruitment and mobilization of party supporters, whether in selecting convention delegates or voting directly or indirectly for a leader. They provide various social groups with opportunities for organized involvement in leadership selection processes in order to promote their interests and agendas. Such efforts may sometimes support of traditional party priorities, particularly if these groups form a significant elements

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<sup>1</sup> Reg Whitaker (2001), “Virtual political parties and the decline of democracy,” *Policy Options*, June.

within a party's traditional base of support. Sometimes, mobilization efforts may reflect efforts by groups marginalized under previous leaders to challenge party priorities or even reverse key party policies – as with David Orchard's successive attempts to turn the federal Progressive Conservatives into a vehicle for his brand of economic nationalism in 1998.<sup>2</sup> They provide candidates (and others) with opportunities to demonstrate organizational strength and coalition-building skills – or the limitations thereof. Not surprisingly, institutional structures which govern leadership election processes can play a significant role in the outcomes of party leadership contests.

This paper explores the implications of leadership voting rules on the dynamics and outcome of the 2017 Conservative Party of Canada leadership race which resulted in the “upset” victory of former House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer.<sup>3</sup> In particular, it contrasts the effects of party rules distributing votes cast proportionately to their internal distribution within 338 separate constituencies across Canada with an analysis of “one-member, one-vote” data made available following the May 2017 convention. It tests the relevance of four major organizational factors which have been advanced to explain the outcome of the May 2017 leadership race: a) relative candidate support in incumbent-held, marginal, and weak Conservative constituencies reflecting riding level convention voting patterns and federal election results in 2011 and 2015; b) endorsements by elected members of the federal CPC caucus; c) relative support by demographic composition of constituencies, as measured by degree of urbanization; d) relative capacity to consolidate support from other candidates on a provincial / regional and national level.

## Historical Background

The selection of Canadian party leaders has evolved through three broad stages. After Confederation, reflecting contemporary British practice, the Governor General selected incoming Prime Ministers when the office fell vacant, usually following “private, behind the scenes ‘soundings’” of senior party figures.<sup>4</sup> Leadership selection by opposition parties was typically the purview of their parliamentary caucuses, usually following intra-party discussions heavily influenced by their “most prominent and influential figures.”<sup>5</sup>

Conventions of party delegates replaced caucus-based elections after the First World War, first for the Liberals and then the Conservatives – often reflecting regional “hollowing-out”

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence LeDuc (2001), “Democratizing Party Leadership Selection,” *Party Politics* 7(3): 335-336.

<sup>3</sup> Alex Boutilier (2017), “Andrew Scheer wins Conservative leadership in major upset,” *The Toronto Star*, 27 May.

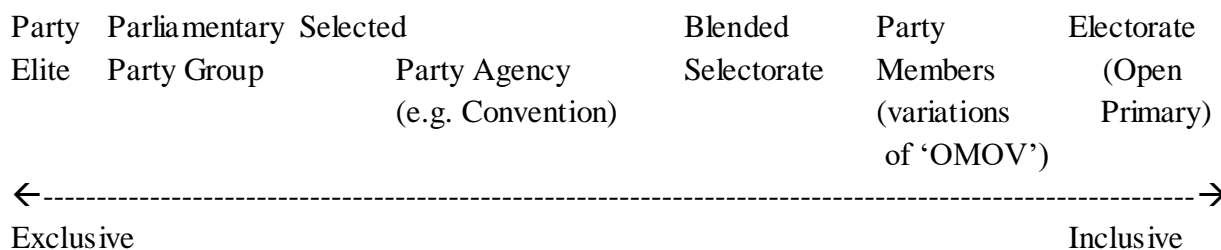
<sup>4</sup> John C. Courtney (1973), *The Selection of National Party Leaders in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), 31-44.

<sup>5</sup> Courtney, *The Selection of National Party Leaders*, 44-55.

of parties following major electoral defeats.<sup>6</sup> Convention delegates were generally a combination of locally (s)elected constituency association representatives, Members of Parliament, recent or nominated candidates, and elected party officials, with local MPs and provincial party organizations exercising varying degrees of influence over delegate selection. The relative openness of conventions, both in terms of participation by party activists and uncertainties of outcomes peaked between the 1960s and 1980s, although the professionalization of campaigns increasingly contributed to mass recruitment of new party members to procure the election of delegates rather than domination by local or regional party elites and activists as in previous decades.<sup>7</sup>

After the Parti Quebecois pioneered the concept of “one-member, one vote” (OMOV) leadership elections before its electoral defeat in 1985,<sup>8</sup> various forms of OMOV elections for federal and provincial party leaders spread across Canada during the late 1980s and 1990s. Figure 1 outlines a continuum of historic leadership selectorates ranging from select groups of party insiders through a nation-wide primary open in principle to all voters – an experiment introduced by Italy’s Democratic Party in 2007.<sup>9</sup> Since 2000, all Canadian federal political parties, and many provincial parties, have come to elect their leaders through some form of OMOV or electoral process involving a “blended selectorate” including direct voting by party members, although no currently governing federal party has yet done so.

Figure 1  
Inclusiveness and Exclusiveness of Party Leaders’ Selectorates



Source: Adapted from Ofer Kenig (2009), “Democratization of Party Leadership Selection: Do Wider Selectorates Produce More Competitive Contests,” *Electoral Studies* 28: 240–7.

<sup>6</sup> Chase B. Meyer and Brett N. Odom (2016), “Raising a big tent: Internal party composition and leadership selectorate expansion,” *Electoral Studies* 43: 1-9.

<sup>7</sup> John C. Courtney (1995), *Do Conventions Matter? Choosing National Party Leaders in Canada* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press); William Cross (2004). *Political Parties*. (Vancouver: UBC Press), 82-83.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Robinson (1985). ["PO vote: It's Johnson in landslide as party leader and next premier."](#) *Montreal Gazette*, 30 September, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Antonella Sedone and Fulvio Venturino (2013), “Bringing voters back in leader selection: the open primaries of the Italian Democratic Party,” *Modern Italy* 18(3): 303-318; <https://doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2013.801675>.

Key factors motivating these shifts included sharp declines in popular support for governing parties with risks of imminent defeat (as in Quebec and Alberta), substantial defeats for major governing parties which reduced them to their electoral or geographic core vote, and strategic efforts by provincial opposition parties to position themselves as vehicles for political change.<sup>10</sup> However, external factors cannot explain, by themselves, the willingness of party elites to surrender their control over leadership factors. Cross et al have identified several important “internal” motivations for broadening leadership selectorates. These include rank-and-file challenges to party elites seen to have grown out-of-touch with grassroots aspirations, a desire by party activists to challenge real or perceived corruption in the conduct of previous leadership contests, the emergence of counter-elites willing and able to mobilize such sentiments to secure internal reforms, and the “contagion” or demonstration effects of competing parties successfully using the broadening of their leadership selectorates to appeal for wider public support. The “contagion” effect also appears to have contributed to growing openness across parties between the 1990s and 2010s to “undifferentiated” party membership in leadership votes, in contrast to previously “reserved” votes for particular groups, including women, young people, university and college students, and (in the NDP) union locals.<sup>11</sup>

OMOV strategies introduced since the early 1990s have generally taken one of three forms. Several provincial parties, followed by the newly formed Canadian Alliance in 2000 and the federal New Democratic Party (NDP) in 2012 and 2017 have opted for “pure” OMOV with an undifferentiated selectorate. Such strategies are usually intended to mobilize or give voice to the existing party base and related groups.

The Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Ontario pioneered OMOV leadership elections based on the proportional allocation of votes, equally weighted across constituencies in 1990, while adopting various refinements of this process over time. The federal PCs used the same method in their 1998 leadership election, although the party reverted to a delegated convention in 2003. Both the federal Conservative and Liberal parties have adopted “weighted” OMOV, the former from its initial contest in 2003, the latter before selecting Justin Trudeau as leader in 2013. Such strategies are generally intended to balancing competing geographical and other interests, as with the merger of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative Parties

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<sup>10</sup> William Cross (1996) “Direct Election of Provincial Party Leaders in Canada, 1985-1995: The end of the leadership convention,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 29: 295-316; Peter Woolstencroft (1992), “Tories Kick Machine to Bits: Leadership Selection and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party,” in R. Kenneth Carty et al., eds., *Leaders and Parties in Canadian Politics: Experiences of the Provinces* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 203-225.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Young and William Cross (2002), “The Rise of Plebiscitary Democracy in Canadian Political Parties,” *Party Politics* 8(6): 673-699; William Cross and André Blais (2012), “Who Selects the Party Leader?” *Party Politics* 18(2): 129-130; William P. Cross, Ofer Kenig, Scott Pruysers, and Gideon Rahat (2016), *The Promise and Challenge of Party Primary Elections: A Comparative Perspective* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press), 51-54.

in 2003, or to facilitate recovery from a serious election defeat, as with the Liberals' relegation to third place in the 2011 federal election. The Canadian Alliance, reflecting its roots in the Reform Party, had developed a strong mass membership base, especially in Western Canada, which far outweighed that of the PCs, much of whose membership (and some MPs) had abandoned the party after newly-chosen leader Peter MacKay's decision to enter merger talks. Adoption of OMOV with equal weighting of all ridings was a way for MacKay to reassure traditional PC voters, particularly in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, that they would not be swamped by the demographic weight of the West and large Ontario cities in the new party.

The federal New Democratic Party opted for a "blended selectorate," with a 25 percent allocation of votes to participating labour unions in its 2003 leadership election, before shifting to undifferentiated OMOV in its 2012 and 2017 contests.<sup>12</sup> Table 1 summarizes the processes and outcomes of major federal party leadership elections and conventions since 2000.

### *OMOV and Party Mobilization*

Major political parties in Canada exist primarily to contest and (hopefully) win elections, or failing that, the balance of power within Parliament. Key functions intended to support this objective include the selection of leaders, the nomination of local candidates, and the mobilization of expert, financial, and volunteer resources.<sup>13</sup> Longer-term trends towards the broadening of leadership selectorates serve these purposes as processes for voter mobilization, competitive positioning (including "branding"), and internal legitimization of the leader's extensive powers. At the same time, as noted above, leadership elections provide groups dissatisfied with their recognition by or influence upon the previous leader with the opportunity to exercise a degree of leverage within selection processes.

Leadership election rules provide both a strategic basis for these processes by setting the terms upon which candidates may pursue the party leadership and conduct their respective campaigns, and by setting the parameters for party members and/or supporters to join the party and cast their votes. However, party elites responsible for designing leadership rules must also consider their effects on "building accommodative bridges" across major social "cleavages" which divide political communities in Canada – not least those of language, region, and more recently, those of major urban regions, smaller cities and rural regions – to demonstrate the potential to build a competitive national electoral coalition.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John Ibbitson (2012), "Enter Mulcair," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 March, A1.

<sup>13</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*.

<sup>14</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*, 77; see also John C. Courtney (1995), *Choosing National Party Leaders in Canada* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), 5-13.

Table 1  
Major Federal Party Leadership Elections / Conventions since 2000

Party	Procedure	Year	Balloting	Candidates	Votes Cast	Winner
Canadian Alliance	OMOV	2000	Two-round	5	120,557 (1) 114,218 (2)	S. Day (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Canadian Alliance	OMOV	2002	Two-round	4	88,228	S. Harper (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Progressive Conservative Party	Delegated convention	2003	Multi-ballot	4	2,629	P. MacKay (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Conservative Party	100 points / Riding	2003	Preferential	3	97,397	S. Harper (1 <sup>st</sup> )
New Democratic Party	Hybrid OMOV + 25% union vote	2003	Preferential*	7	44,707**	J. Layton (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Liberal Party	Delegated convention	2003	Hybrid; delegate votes unbound after first ballot	2	2,629	P. Martin (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Liberal Party	Delegated convention	2006	Hybrid (see above)	8	4,815	S. Dion (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Liberal Party	Delegated Convention	2009	Acclamation	1	1,964	M. Ignatieff (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Bloc Québécois	OMOV	2011	Preferential	3	14,039	D. Paillé (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
NDP	OMOV	2012	Preferential*	7	65,108 (1) 59,210 (4)	T. Mulcair (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Liberal	100 points / riding	2013	Preferential	6	104,552	J. Trudeau (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Conservative	100 points / riding	2017	Preferential	14	141,362 (1) 118,137 (13)	A. Scheer (13 <sup>th</sup> )
NDP	OMOV	2017	Multi-ballot	4	65,509	J. Singh (1 <sup>st</sup> )

\* Members had option of voting by mail, internet, or in-person, with mail ballots being restricted to preferential voting.

\*\* 43,652 individual members + 957 labour votes pro-rated to equal 25 percent of overall votes.

A central question in structuring these rules is their capacity to contribute to “broadening” the base of party support to increase the chances of winning the next election, without abandoning the interests of the party’s historical or core supporters. However, mobilizing party membership, while important, is only one element, and not necessarily the most important one, of mobilizing public support. Farney and Koop describe the emergence of “new brokerage parties” in which “parties pursue minimum winning coalitions that are geographic patchworks built upon the micro-targeting of carefully defined societal and economic groups in swing ridings in ways that, as with old fashioned brokerage, minimize the divides between these groups and tempers ideology.”<sup>15</sup> However, for individual candidates as opposed to party strategists, contesting leadership elections is primarily a numbers game: who can create the conditions necessary to generate large numbers of memberships, a favourable image, and conditions conducive to electoral momentum sufficient to become a leading contender, and ultimately leader.

Lively debates also continue about the relative merits of “closed” primaries limited to paid-up party members, and “open” primaries in which independents and members of other parties may also vote. Expanding the leadership selectorate allows for the potential broadening of party support, and the renewal of its activist base. It also enables parties to expand their databases of potential financial contributors, a matter of increasingly urgency following successive changes to election finance legislation capping contribution levels for large donors in 2003, banning corporate and union donations in 2006, and reducing public subsidies for political parties after 2011. However, it may also dilute the influence of existing party activists, while creating an even larger segment of the membership with limited commitment to ongoing participation in or even support of the party.<sup>16</sup>

In practice, Canadian political parties have demonstrated limited capacity or inclination to enforce membership exclusivity in leadership elections, leading to accusations that organized outside interests and supporters of other parties have sought to manipulate electoral outcomes for their own purposes.<sup>17</sup> However, the growing use of ICT technologies to facilitate voter access have led to other forms of screening to limit the potential for voter fraud and manipulation of electoral results, increasing the potential for administrative measures (or failures) to affect the outcomes of close contests.<sup>18</sup> Such bureaucratic restrictions may also enforce a degree of

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<sup>15</sup> James Farney and Royce Koop (2017), *The Conservative Party in Opposition and Government*, in *The Blueprint: Conservative parties and their impact on Canadian politics*, eds. J.P. Lewis and Joanna Everitt (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 33.

<sup>16</sup> Cross et al, *The Promise and Challenge of Party Primary Elections*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ted Morton (2013), “Leadership Selection in Alberta: 1992-2011 – A Personal Perspective,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Summer, 31-38; Tammy Robert (2017), “Part I – Sask Party Leadership Race Candidates: what you need to know before you vote (or just because),” *OurSask.com*, 13 December; Laura Stone (2018), “In new book, Bemier attributes Scheer’s leadership win to ‘fake Conservatives,’” *The Globe and Mail*, 10 April, A1.

<sup>18</sup> Marie-Danielle Smith (2017), “Conservative leadership race hits ballot snag,” *National Post*, 17 May, A4; Robert Fife, Laura Stone, and Daniel Leblanc (2017), “Bernier camp casts doubt on Conservative leadership

informal gatekeeping in the absence of local facilitators to assist members in casting their ballots. Use of Internet voting, especially for single day events, also risks external disruption, as during the 2012 NDP leadership convention.<sup>19</sup> These trade-offs reinforce the importance of the technical rules for leadership elections, not least the structuring of the election process, the formal conditions imposed on candidates for entry into the race, the length of time between the setting of the election date (and announcement of related rules), the terms under which memberships are sold, cut-off dates for new memberships, and rules governing the casting of ballots – all of which may influence the number of leadership contestants and the outcome of the election itself.

### *Rules Matter: Balancing Inclusion and Integrity in Leadership Selection Processes*

The rules governing party leadership contests and the ways they are administered reflect the internal priorities, experience and administrative capacity of party executives and their professional staff. Cross notes that “party leadership selections are essentially viewed in law as private events of private organizations,”<sup>20</sup> and thus beyond the purview of public regulation, unlike party primaries in the United States and other countries, which combine legislative requirements with discretionary elements. The main exception to this principle is the public regulation of donations to leadership candidates under the *Canada Elections Act* since 2004.<sup>21</sup>

As noted above, the federal Conservatives opted to maintain their weighted OMOV system in their 2016-17 leadership race, with proportional distribution of votes cast for candidates in each constituency to a maximum of 100 points per riding. Voting was by preferential ballot, allowing party members to rank up to 10 candidates in order of preference. This approach placed a premium on breadth of candidate organization: the ability to build a viable national organization not just in areas of historical membership strength or large pools of potential members, but in areas of recent or historical Conservative weakness. It also increased importance of candidate positioning to appeal for second, third, and even fourth place votes from supporters of other candidates. Unlike the party’s initial leadership contest in 2004, the absence of established leadership or “star” candidates meant that the 2016-17 contest was “wide open,” with no candidates enjoying meaningful advantages of seniority or privileged access to organizational or financial resources capable of preempting all but the best-heeled challengers.

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vote,” *The Globe and Mail*, 3 June, A1; Justin Giovannetti and Karen Howlett (2018), “As PC supporters waited for a winner, lawyers, scrutineers scrambled in back room to sort out ballot dispute,” *The Globe and Mail*, 12 March, A1.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Bryden (2012), “Cyber-attack slows NDP leadership vote,” *The Globe and Mail*, 26 March, A5; Tobi Cohen (2012), “10,000 computers behind ‘malicious’ attack on NDP,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, 28 March, A1.

<sup>20</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*, 85.

<sup>21</sup> Sebastian Spano (2006), “Campaign Financing and Election Regulation,” PRB 05-79E (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 23 February); accessed April 28, 2018; <https://lop.parl.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/prb0579-e.htm#aleadership>



To preclude the emergence of self-funded candidates such as Belinda Stronach, heiress to the Magna Corporation fortune which had underpinned her 2004 bid for the Conservative leadership,<sup>22</sup> the Harper government had passed legislation in 2014 preventing individual candidates from contributing more than \$ 25,000 to their own campaigns in any combination of gifts, loans, or loan guarantees. At the same time, it required public disclosure of all contributions in cash or kind above a minimum threshold, and imposed a cumulative contribution limit of \$ 1,500 (\$ 1,525 in 2016) on donations to all candidates in a single leadership race.<sup>23</sup>

However, within these parameters, the party imposed relatively few additional barriers to prospective candidates. It required them to pay a relatively modest \$ 50,000 entry fee before January 1, 2017, an additional \$ 50,000 good conduct deposit as an inducement to abide by party rules, transmit all donations to Conservative Fund Canada to allow the issuance of tax receipts and enforcement of legal limits on cumulative donations, along with a \$ 5 million spending cap, up from \$ 2.5 million in 2004.<sup>24</sup> Candidates were also required to submit signatures from a modest 300 party members in at least 30 ridings spanning seven provinces.

All Canadian residents (not just citizens) 14 and older were allowed to purchase memberships, following previous practice, with residency determined by the *Canada Elections Act*'s provisions for voter registration. (The party's leadership election organizing committee initially set a membership fee of \$ 25 (\$ 30 for two years), up from the previous \$ 15, to help finance related administrative costs. However, strong criticisms about "elitism" and "gatekeeping" from senior party figures prompted an early retreat. However, unlike previous leadership races, individuals were required to pay for their own memberships with credit cards, (except for immediate family members), rather than allowing for cash payment to reduce incentives for bulk second-hand purchases. In March 2017, the party revoked 1,351 memberships after investigating allegations by Kevin O'Leary's campaign that they had been purchased with anonymous pre-paid credit cards funneled through two computer IP addresses.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Stronach, who later defected to the Liberals, contributed an estimated \$ 3 million to her 2004 leadership campaign. Kady O'Malley (2016), "How tougher financing rules could hit the Tory leadership race," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 16 March.

<sup>23</sup> Elections Canada (2015), *The Electoral System of Canada: Political Financing* (Ottawa); <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=ces&document=part6&lang=e>." Notwithstanding these limits, Elections Canada data reported outstanding loans by Kevin O'Leary to his own campaign of \$ 187,145 in May 2018; Elections Canada, "Political Financing: Financial Returns: Kevin O'Leary," accessed May 3, 2018; <http://www.elections.ca/WPAPPS/WPF/EN/LC/DetailedReport?act=C23&selectedEvent=8558&reportOption=2&returnStatus=1&selectedReportType=10&selectedPart=2A&selectedClientId=36116&queryId=43b4147fc2de4da5ba77775aee23ba03&total200pages=0&current200Page=1&displayIntroduction=False&displayDescription=False>

<sup>24</sup> Article 4, Conservative Party of Canada (2016), "Rules and Procedures for the 2016-2017 Leadership;" accessed April 28, 2018; [http://www.conservative.ca/media/documents/LEOC\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](http://www.conservative.ca/media/documents/LEOC_2016_EN.pdf); Jason Fekete, "Conservative leadership race kicks off with a \$ 50,000 entrance fee and \$ 5 million spending cap," *National Post*, 9 March.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Zimonjic (2017), "Conservative Party strikes 1,351 names off membership list after allegations," *CBC News*, 17 March.

The party set a 60-day deadline before the ballot for new membership sales, with allowances for lapsed membership renewals within that window, to allow for list validation and the mailing of ballots to all members within thirty days of the voting deadline. Despite party incentives of lower processing fees for early submission of new memberships by candidates, almost half of memberships were sold in the month before the closing of the membership window in late March 2018. Unlike some recent contests (including Alberta and Ontario Conservative races in 2017-18), there was no provision for Internet voting. Most voting was by mail, with members required to submit copies of valid identification with their ballots to establish their identity and place of residence, although the party provided for thirteen in-person voting locations. In some cases, candidates provided ballot pick up services in smaller centres to reduce the unpredictability of rural mail delivery.

Despite fears expressed that a more complex process would discourage membership sales and depress turnout, and periodic reports of missing ballots, the voting membership increased from about 100,000 at the beginning of the race to 259,010 in March 2018,<sup>26</sup> with 141,362 ballots (or 54.6 percent) ultimately cast. Although this turnout was less than 1 percent of voter turnout in the 2015 federal election, it was the largest number ever to vote directly in a federal party leadership election.<sup>27</sup> “Inconsistent data entry” led to short-lived challenges from two of the losing candidates, Maxime Bernier and Kellie Leitch, over discrepancies between publicly announced vote totals and the tally sheets which identified the members who had voted which were slightly greater than the final margin in the actual (not weighted) votes received by the two front-runners.<sup>28</sup> However, as party rules left no room for appeal, neither candidate had effective legal or political leverage to contest the final outcome.

### *The 2017 CPC Leadership Race*

At 14½ months, between the formal convention call in March 2016 and the actual election on May 27, 2017, the 2016-17 federal Conservative leadership race was not the longest such process in modern Canadian history. That distinction belongs to the federal Liberals in the 2002-03 following the resignation of Jean Chrétien. However, it boasted the largest number of candidates – 14 – of any major party leadership contest in modern Canadian history, surpassing the presence

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Radwanski (2017), “The many oddities of the Conservative leadership campaign,” *The Globe and Mail*, 6 May, A9.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Grenier (2017), “Popular vote numbers reveal wider margin of victory for Scheer,” *CBC News*, 29 May.

<sup>28</sup> Fife, Stone, and Leblanc, “Bernier camp casts doubt on Conservative leadership vote”; Daniel Leblanc, Robert Fife and Laura Stone (2017), “Leitch camp questions Tory leadership voting process,” *The Globe and Mail*, 5 June, A4.

of 11 candidates at the 1967 and 1976 PC leadership conventions and 9 candidates at the 1968 federal Liberal convention ultimately won by Pierre Trudeau.<sup>29</sup>

No senior former cabinet minister seriously attempted to replace Stephen Harper following his resignation in the aftermath of the Conservatives' loss in the October 2015 federal election, although former Treasury Board President Tony Clement withdrew in October 2016 after testing the waters.<sup>30</sup> Peter MacKay had already announced his intention to retire to private life. Jason Kenney opted instead to seek the leadership of the Alberta PCs and merger of Alberta's two centre-right parties to mount a united challenge to the governing NDP. Their absence effectively buried historical divisions between the old Reform/Alliance and PC parties which had merged to form the Conservative Party in 2003.

Six ministers in the previous Harper government (see Table 4), one former minister, three MPs, two former MPs, and Vancouver businessman Rick Peterson had entered the race by December 2016, to be joined by celebrity businessman Kevin O'Leary in late January 2017. The sizeable number of candidates and the complexity of ballot options led candidates to frame their campaigns using four main strategic options: the politics of personality, polarization, the pursuit of particular agendas), and positioning.

Following the example of Donald Trump, O'Leary sought to parley his brash personality, celebrity profile, and creative use of news media to grab the spotlight as the "fresh outsider" candidate, although his visibly limited knowledge of Canadian political institutions also made him the most polarizing candidate in the race. O'Leary had sold the most new memberships, about 33,000 by the membership cut-off date and was widely seen to be leading the race in polls of PC members along with soundings of party insiders. However, polls also showed him among the candidate with the highest negative rankings,<sup>31</sup> followed by Kellie Leitch (see Figure 2).

Leitch was one of several candidates who sought to exploit latent public support for positions challenging the party status quo. Her outspoken adoption of cultural nationalism and identity politics also raised polarizing echoes of Trump. Her polar opposite in the race was

Table 4  
Conservative leadership hopefuls  
**Former Ministers, Current MPs**

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<sup>29</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*, 81.

<sup>30</sup> Jason Fekete (2016), "Tony Clement drops out of Tory leadership race to avoid 'exposing family to further financial risk,'" *National Post*, 13 October.

<sup>31</sup> Mike Coates (2017), "Did O'Leary know what he was getting into?" *National Post*, 27 May, A8-9; David Colletto (2017), "Was Kevin O'Leary the Conservative Party's best hope to beat Trudeau? Data suggests he wasn't," (Ottawa: Abacus Data, 27 April).

Lisa Raitt	Ontario	Transport (2013-15), Labour (2010-13), Natural Resources (2008-10)
Maxime Bernier	Quebec	Small Business and Tourism (2011-15), Foreign Affairs (2007-08), Industry (2006-07)
Steven Blaney	Quebec	Veterans Affairs (2011-13), Public Safety (2013-15)
Kellie Leitch	Ontario	Labour, Status of Women (2013-15)
Erin O'Toole	Ontario	Veterans Affairs (2015)
Michael Chong	Ontario	Intergovernmental Affairs, Youth, Sport (2006)

### Other current MPs

Deepak Obrhai	Alberta (1997- )	
Andrew Scheer	Saskatchewan (2004- )	Speaker of House of Commons (2011-15)
Brad Trost	Saskatchewan (2004- )	

### Former MPs

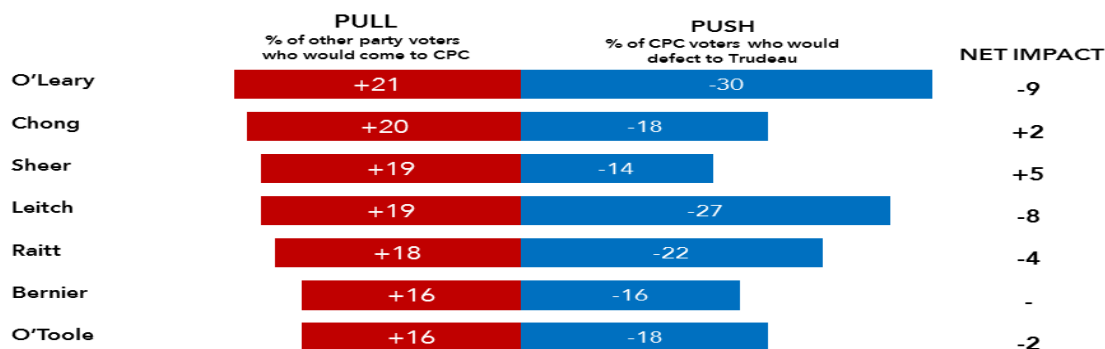
Chris Alexander	Ontario (2011-15)	Citizenship and Immigration (2013-15)
Pierre Lemieux	Ontario (2006-15)	
Andrew Saxton	British Columbia (2008-15)	

### Businessmen

Rick Peterson  
Kevin O'Leary

Figure 2

## PULL AND PUSH OF CPC LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES



ABACUS DATA

Source: David Colletto (2017), "Was Kevin O'Leary the Conservative Party's best hope to beat Trudeau? Data suggests he wasn't," (Ottawa: Abacus Data, 27 April)

Michael Chong, who openly championed a carbon tax and adopted culturally liberal positions intended to attract younger, urban voters, especially in Central Canada, if at considerable cost to his support in Western Canada. Chong emerged as the favourite of social media groups which

mobilized in efforts to block more right-populist candidates, particularly O’Leary and Leitch.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, former MP Pierre Lemieux and Saskatchewan MP Brad Trost appealed strongly to socially conservative and pro-life voters within Conservative ranks, with the latter also securing extensive support in communities with significant numbers of Chinese-Canadian voters.

Libertarian Maxime Bernier sought to distinguish himself by presenting himself as the most strongly free-market, small government candidate in the race, staking out clear, if often polarizing positions, most notably his proposal to end supply management of heavily protected agricultural sectors, if with substantial compensation. Building from a base among business-minded urban conservatives, particularly in Quebec, he had emerged (with O’Leary) as one of the two front-runners by March 2017. However, his uncompromising positions provoked a significant backlash among rural Quebec interests, especially dairy farmers, whose “Friends of Supply Management” group actively used social media to mobilize support and commissioned polls suggesting Bernier’s election could lose up to one-third of existing Conservative support in that province.<sup>33</sup> Although fellow-Quebecer Steven Blaney was the most outspoken champion of Quebec farm interests within the race, first ballot outcomes suggest these voters gradually gravitated to Scheer.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, Bernier lost his own riding of Beauce by a narrow margin to the latter, with much the largest turnout in Quebec.

Two other candidates, former Commons’ Speaker Andrew Scheer and Ontario MP Erin O’Toole pursued a “Harper-light” strategy – securing endorsements from caucus colleagues and focusing on themes aimed at bringing different Conservative factions together rather than focusing on internal “wedge” issues (except, perhaps, for supply management). Scheer rolled out most of his (ultimately, 24) endorsements from Commons colleagues early in the race, along with extensive provincial endorsements, especially in Saskatchewan and Alberta, while O’Toole gradually accumulated 31 MP endorsements, along with support from prominent Ontario and Nova Scotia Tories.

On April 26, 2017, two days after party officials had mailed out ballots to members, O’Leary upset the race by withdrawing and endorsing Bernier, despite being the perceived front-runner, ostensibly because he did not believe he could secure enough support in Quebec to win the next election.<sup>35</sup> Others, including his former campaign chair, have suggested that he lacked

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Mazereeuw (2017), “Digital campaigns say they’ve convinced thousands to try to swing Conservative leadership contest to the centre,” *The Hill Times*, 19 April.

<sup>33</sup> Joël-Denis Bellavance (2017), “Le parti conservateur perdrait des points avec Maxime Bernier,” *La Presse*, 28 March.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Leblanc (2017), “In Quebec, weak membership numbers have Tory organizers dreaming big,” *The Globe and Mail*, 24 February; Daniel Leblanc and Laura Stone (2017), “Bernier’s collapse began in Quebec,” *The Globe and Mail*, 29 May, A6.

<sup>35</sup> Marie-Danielle Smith (2017), “Late night deal sealed O’Leary’s exit from race,” *National Post*, 27 April, A4.

the basic commitment to politics and party building necessary to provide effective leadership when the demands of public service conflicted with his personal interests.<sup>36</sup> Bernier became the presumptive front-runner, but with few indications of how the riding-level distribution of votes or the shake-out of preferential balloting would affect the outcome, especially as the remaining twelve candidates avoided visible deals to consolidate support or establish blocking coalitions.

### *Assessing the First Ballot*

The preferential ballot process and the absence of visible pre-vote agreements among the thirteen remaining candidates to accelerate the consolidation of the vote created conditions conducive to widespread dispersion of voter support on the first ballot. Bernier secured a modest lead with 28.89 percent of weighted votes across Canada, followed by Scheer (21.82%), and O'Toole (10.7%). A cluster of second-tier candidates – Brad Trost (8.4%), Michael Chong (7.6%), Pierre Lemieux (7.4%), and Kellie Leitch (7.0%) – followed in close order, trailed by Lisa Raitt (3.34%) and six also-rans averaging 0.8%. The latter group included O'Leary, who had withdrawn too late to remove his name from the ballot. Except for Leitch, who edged out Lemieux on the 8<sup>th</sup> count after Raitt fell out of the race, this sequence of candidates persisted until the 13<sup>th</sup> and final count, when the distribution of O'Toole's residual choices catapulted Scheer past Bernier to win the leadership. Table 5 summarizes the top eight candidates' proportions of the weighted first ballot vote nationally and in each region, together with the number of constituencies in which each candidate led the field.

Bernier's organizers not only expected him to lead on the first ballot, but to consolidate his wide advantage in individual constituencies (ridings) in order to win the election. He led in 197.5 ridings (including ties), 58.3 percent of the total, six provinces – Quebec (39.4% of weighted votes), Alberta (35.5%), Newfoundland (29.8%), British Columbia (24.8%), Ontario (24.4%), Nova Scotia (21.8%) – and the Territories (35.2%). However, Scheer clearly established himself in second place from the outset with strong support (47.5%, 14 ridings) in his home province of Saskatchewan, smaller margins in PEI and New Brunswick, and most importantly, strong second place finishes in Quebec (27.7%, leading in 24.5 ridings), Alberta (23.7%, 7 ridings), British Columbia (20.0%, 8 ridings), and Ontario (16.2%, 14 ridings). Scheer led in 78.5 constituencies or 23.5 percent overall. O'Toole finished second in Nova Scotia and PEI, and third in Ontario, B.C., Alberta, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. However, he was far enough behind Scheer in the national count for the count to turn into a two man race as other candidates fell off the ballot. Trost demonstrated strong pockets of support in suburban Toronto

Table 5  
First Ballot Results

	Canada	Ont.	Que.	B.C.	AB	Man./	Atlantic
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<sup>36</sup> Coates, "Did O'Leary know what he was getting into?"

						Sask.	
Bernier: % of weighted vote	28.9	24.4	39.4	24.8	35.5	23.3	22.8
# of ridings led	197.5	71.5	50.5	23	27	8	15
Scheer %	21.8	16.2	27.7	20.0	23.7	32.8	20.1
#	78.5	14	24.5	8	7	15	10
O'Toole %	10.7	12.1	5.9	12.5	10.2	10.3	14.9
#	16.5	10	0	1	0	2	3
Trost %	8.4	11.0	4.9	10.2	7.8	8.7	5.3
#	16.5	12	1	6	0	0	0
Chong %	7.6	10.9	3.6	9.6	4.6	3.4	8.1
#	18.5	2.5	2	0	0	0	1
Lemieux %	7.4	9.2	4.4	7.3	6.0	10.9	6.4
#	4	2	0	0	0	2	0
Leitch %	7.0	7.6	6.0	7.8	6.0	6.4	8.7
#	3	1	0	2	0	0	0
Raitt %	3.3	3.9	1.1	2.9	1.8	2.0	9.7
#	4	1	0	0	0	0	3

and Vancouver, Chong in inner city ridings in Ontario and Quebec, and university towns in the former. As Conservative candidates in the 2015 election had finished third or worse in 16 of 18 ridings in which Chong posted first ballot leads (beyond his own riding of Wellington-Halton Hills), averaging 14.3 percent of the vote, it is likely that his campaign benefitted significantly from the efforts of external social media groups in these areas.

Cross has observed that “when constituency associations are allocated the same number of delegates regardless of how many party members there are in the riding, activists in areas where the party is weakest have the greatest influence in leadership choice.”<sup>37</sup> He has also pointed to patterns of historical turnout influenced by actual levels of regional (or sub-regional) party support in the previous election.<sup>38</sup> Although no pre-campaign riding-level membership data is available, post-campaign data indicates that party membership turnout was lowest in Quebec, followed by Newfoundland and, to a lesser extent, Maritime provinces. However, there appears to be little or no correlation between historical levels of party support and leadership turnout in individual ridings.

Table 6  
Geographical Distribution of Conservative Votes  
2011 and 2015 General Elections and 2017 Leadership Election

<sup>37</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*, 95.

<sup>38</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*, 94-95. -

	2011	2015	2017 Leadership Election				Turnout vs. nat'l average adjusted for population
	Election	Election	Actual Votes Cast	Weighted Vote by Riding	Ratio to total per riding votes	Turnout	
	-----		percent	-----	cast		
Ontario	42.1	40.8	45.7	35.8	0.78	535.4	1.181
Alberta	15.9	20.5	20.4	10.1	0.49	848.3	1.738
B.C.	14.5	12.6	13.6	12.4	0.91	460.3	1.038
Quebec	11.0	12.7	6.8	23.1	3.38	124.0	0.298
Saskatchewan	3.9	4.8	5.2	4.1	0.79	528.9	1.644
Manitoba	4.5	4.0	3.5	4.1	1.19	353.4	0.957
Nova Scotia	2.8	1.7	2.0	3.3	1.60	261.8	0.779
N. Brunswick	2.9	2.0	1.5	3.0	1.97	213.0	0.723
Nfld. & Lab.	1.1	0.5	0.4	2.1	4.70	89.3	0.304
P.E.I.	0.6	0.3	0.4	1.2	2.68	156.8	1.079
Territories	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.9	2.67	156.0	1.000
Canada	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.00	419.2	1.000

Table 6 compares Conservative voter turnout by province and territories in the 2011 and 2015 general elections with the 2017 Conservative leadership election. It compares the proportion of the weighted vote assigned to each province based on its share of constituencies with the percentage of leadership votes cast by province. It also compares the average voter turnout per constituency in each province with an average turnout ratio adjusted to equalize major differences in average riding populations across provinces and territories. This data indicates that 2017 Conservative leadership turnout in Quebec (6.8 percent in aggregate) was barely more than half that province's share of the 2015 nation-wide Conservative vote (12.8 percent) – a sign of serious organizational weakness reflected in turnout levels below 100 in 43 of the province's 78 constituencies, and 24 of 43 constituencies nation-wide with turnouts of 100 to 199 votes (see Table 7).<sup>39</sup> Quebec's proportion of the weighted leadership vote (23.1 percent) was 3.38 times its share of actual turnout (6.8 percent), a proportion exceeded only by Newfoundland and Labrador (4.70). From another perspective, population-adjusted turnout per riding was 29.8 percent of the Canadian average in Quebec, 30.4 percent in Newfoundland. Although the Maritimes and northern territories were structurally overrepresented – by design – in the weighting of leadership votes according to constituency representation, average population

Table 7

## Voter Turnout by Province and Constituency

Average	< 100	100-199	200-499	500-999	> 1000	Total
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<sup>39</sup> Of the 12 Conservative held ridings in Quebec, 1 (Bernier's) had turnout over 1,000; 1 (Blaney's) 435; 3 between 200 and 399; 6 between 100 and 199; and 1 (Beauport-Limoilou) under 100.



Nfld.&Lab.	89.3	5	1	1	0	0	7
Quebec	124.0	43	24	10	0	1	78
PEI	156.8	0	4	0	0	0	4
Territories	156.0	1	1	1	0	0	3
N.Brunswick	213.0	2	2	6	0	0	10
N.Scotia	261.8	0	2	9	0	0	11
Manitoba	353.4	2	1	9	2	0	14
B.Columbia	460.0	0	3	20	19	0	42
Sask.	528.9	0	0	3	11	0	14
Ontario	535.4	1	5	49	64	2	121
Alberta	848.3	0	0	6	16	12	34
Canada	419.2	54	43	114	112	15	338

[Source: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pDnsG7p45gqNHUvswmjMmMVtglxmVSoxprLWd9kMV-w/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pDnsG7p45gqNHUvswmjMmMVtglxmVSoxprLWd9kMV-w/edit#gid=0); author's calculations.

adjusted turnout levels in the Territories (especially Yukon) and P.E.I. were at or slightly above the national average.

The areas of strongest *aggregate* Conservative turnout: Alberta (0.49), Ontario (0.78), Saskatchewan (0.79), and British Columbia (0.91) were all structurally underrepresented to varying degrees. However, reflecting candidates' efforts at voter mobilization, population-adjusted turnout levels varied significantly across these provinces, from 103.8 percent of the national average in B.C. to 164.4 percent in Saskatchewan and 173.8 percent in Alberta.

The structure of the vote provided candidates with strong incentives to cultivate broad membership networks in provinces with relatively few Conservatives – especially Quebec, but also Newfoundland – and smaller provinces with persistent, but weaker Conservative networks. By contrast, those provinces with the highest turnouts were in Alberta (average 848.3 per riding), Ontario (535.4), British Columbia (460.0), and disproportionately in Saskatchewan (528.9) given its substantially smaller population per riding. In practice, as noted below, Maxime Bernier and Andrew Scheer were the two candidates who were most effective in mobilizing support in ridings with weaker Conservative profiles, while appealing to very different demographic segments of support. A delegated convention, with delegates' votes bound on the first ballot, or a pure OMOV preferential vote may have resulted in different outcomes, particularly if O'Leary had remained in the race.

Table 8

The "Rotten Borough" Vote: First Ballot Outcomes of Ridings with fewer than 100 leadership voters each

	Bernier	Scheer	O'Toole	Trost	Chong	Leitch	Lemieux	Raitt
<b>Québec (43)</b>	43.89%	21.47%	5.81%	4.66%	3.56%	7.12%	4.87%	0.97%
<b>ROC (11)</b>	31.07%	18.84%	10.42%	6.92%	6.12%	11.81%	5.78%	5.29%
<b>Canada (54)</b>	41.28%	20.94%	6.75%	5.13%	4.08%	8.08%	5.06%	1.86%

Table 9

First Ballot Outcomes in Weak Conservative Ridings

100-199 Leadership Voters Each

	Bernier	Scheer	O'Toole	Trost	Chong	Leitch	Lemieux	Raitt
<b>Québec (24)</b>	35.13%	36.24%	4.87%	5.56%	3.27%	4.05%	3.63%	1.01%
<b>ROC (19)</b>	25.10%	17.84%	10.46%	6.89%	9.48%	7.96%	9.63%	8.84%
<b>Canada (43)</b>	30.83%	28.11%	7.34%	6.15%	6.01%	5.78%	6.28%	4.47%

Tables 8 and 9 summarize the first ballot outcomes of the 97 weakest ridings with fewer than 100 (54) and 100-199 (43) votes cast respectively. Bernier led in 43 of the 54 “rotten boroughs” with fewer than 100 votes cast, averaging 41.28 percent of their total weighted vote, substantially above his overall national average of 28.89 percent. Scheer led in 9.5 ridings, averaging 20.94 percent, close to his national first ballot average of 21.82 percent. In the second weakest tier of ridings (Table 9), however, Scheer ran almost even with Bernier, leading 16.5 ridings (with 28.1% of the available “points”) to the latter’s 17.5 (with 30.8%), with 9 ridings scattered among other candidates. Scheer’s strength in small town and rural Quebec, partly reflecting the active efforts of dairy farmers and their allies, effectively denied Bernier the regional margin of victory on which he had been counting to win the leadership.

The next section analyzes three significant aspects of candidates’ strategies as reflected in the outcome of the first ballot: endorsements by elected members of the federal CPC caucus; relative support by constituency demographics, particularly the relative degree of urbanization; and candidates’ relative capacity to consolidate support from other candidates on a sub-regional, provincial and national level.

### *Local MP Endorsements: A Significant Factor?*

Democratization of leadership races appears to have eroded the relative influence of local MPs (or MLAs) in guiding or mobilizing membership support for their favoured candidates, particularly in contests involving opposition parties. The recruitment of support from parliamentary and legislative colleagues may contribute to an impression of momentum in framing media coverage. However, party membership ranks tend to thin out between elections, and incumbent MPs or MLAs have limited incentives to maintain local party membership levels unless vulnerable to intra-party nomination challenges. These factors limit the practical organizational value of their endorsements absent the willingness and motivation to invest considerable effort in mobilizing local supporters.

The 2017 Conservative leadership race provides a useful test in evaluating the value of MP endorsements. Of the 99 Conservative MPs in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament elected in 2015, 70 endorsed one of the fourteen candidates. In addition, nine sitting MPs contested the leadership. Table 10 summarizes MP support for each candidate at the end of the race.

Table 10

## MP Endorsements of Conservative Leadership Candidates 2017

Erin O'Toole	31	Kellie Leitch	3	Remaining eight	
Andrew Scheer	24	Lisa Raitt	3	candidates	0
Maxime Bernier	7	Michael Chong	2		

To test the effectiveness of a local MP's support, this section analyzes first ballot support for each MP's preferred candidate relative to that candidate's average support in the MP's province. Province-wide support is more relevant than national support due to wide variations in leadership candidates' support across provinces. This analysis also tests for individual MPs' ability to mobilize sufficient support to provide their chosen candidate with a local lead on the first and final ballots. Table 11 summarizes findings for each question.

Table 11

## THE ENDORSEMENT EFFECT

	MP Endorsed	Average Vote %	Lead Ballot 1?	Average Rank	vs. Candidate's Provincial Average	Added "Value"*	5-9%	Win Final Ballot?
O'Toole	31	18.59%	7	2.81	7.44%	9	9	
Scheer	24	39.19%	17	1.38	10.36%	14	2	20
Bernier	7	46.66%	6	1.14	15.28%	4	2	5
Leitch	3	12.28%	0	3.33	4.28%	0	1	
Raitt	3	8.86%	0	5.67	4.97%	0	2	
Chong	2	11.90%	0	3.50	1.15%	0	0	
Total	70	27.58%	42.9%	2.31	8.81%	38.6%	22.9%	80.6%
Candidates**	9	42.63%	6	1.44	27.40%	8	1	1
Not Endorsing	20							

\* Vote share above provincial average generated by MP's candidate.

\*\* Ridings of incumbent MPs who were leadership candidates.

Local MPs' support correlates with an average premium of 8.81 percentage points on their preferred candidate's province-wide support. By contrast, candidates themselves generated a comparable premium of 27.4 percent in their own constituencies. However, only 42.9 percent of local MPs' preferred candidates actually posted first-ballot leads in their ridings. Scheer

supporters (17 of 24) were most successful in that regard, followed proportionately by Bernier-supporting MPs (6 of 7) and O'Toole supporters (7 of 31). Scheer MPs were able to provide turnout levels 10 percent or more above provincial averages in 14 of 17 such cases, led by Alain Reyes (Richmond-Arthabaska, Quebec) with 84.02 percent on the first ballot and 89.06 percent on the final ballot. Scheer named Reyes as his Quebec lieutenant after winning the leadership.

However, MP support was of significantly less value when exerted on behalf of second-tier candidates, or on behalf of candidates lacking broader regional or sub-regional support. Of the eight MPs who supported Leitch, Chong or Raitt, only three were able to better their candidates' limited provincial support by more than five percentage points. Few MPs supporting either Scheer or O'Toole in major urban centres were able to "deliver" their ridings on the first ballot against strong challenges by Bernier and, in some cases, Trost. Conversely, Scheer was successful enough in establishing himself as Saskatchewan "favourite son," with the active support of at least 21 Saskatchewan Party MLAs, that only two of his five Parliamentary colleagues in that province were able to provide more than 5 percent "value added."

Even so, political analyst Eric Grenier is undoubtedly correct in noting that in a very close race, Scheer's caucus support was critical in helping him consolidate the second-choice support necessary for him to win a closely contested vote, particularly given Bernier's very limited support within caucus.<sup>40</sup> An analysis of the 99 Conservative-held ridings, summarized in Table 12, indicates that in aggregate, Scheer's consolidation of second- and third-choice support on the final ballot gave him a decisive margin of victory, winning 65 ridings averaging 56.11 percent support overall, compared with Bernier's 34 ridings averaging 43.89 percent.

Table 12

Comparing Final Ballot Support in Conservative-Held Ridings

	CPC Held Ridings		CPC Held Ridings		All Ridings	
	Bernier	Scheer	Bernier	Scheer	Bernier	Scheer
Alberta	18	11	52.62%	47.38%	53.07%	46.93%
British Columbia	3	7	40.19%	59.81%	47.06%	52.94%
Saskatchewan	0	10	25.32%	74.68%	26.20%	73.80%
Manitoba	0	5	40.92%	59.08%	50.55%	49.45%
Ontario	9	24	43.37%	56.63%	48.15%	51.85%
Quebec	4	8	43.98%	56.02%	55.62%	44.38%
Sub-total	34	65	43.89%	56.11%	49.57%	50.43%
All 338 ridings					49.05%	50.95%

This 12 percentage point margin contrasted with an overall margin of 0.86 percentage points in the six provinces which elected Conservative MPs, and 1.90 percentage points across

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<sup>40</sup> Eric Grenier (2017), "Conservative MP endorsements made a difference in the leadership vote," *CBC News*, 2 June.

all 338 ridings. A major factor in this dichotomy was the breakdown among urban, suburban, small urban-rural and northern or remote ridings across Canada.

### *Demographic Composition of Constituencies*

Although regional and linguistic differences remain significant sources of political cleavages in Canada, they are increasingly complemented by economic and cultural differences among major urban centres, their suburban fringes, smaller cities, and predominantly rural/small town areas. The federal Conservatives were decimated in major urban Canada (city-regions with more than 500,000 residents) outside Calgary, Edmonton and Quebec City in the 2015 federal election, particularly in suburban areas in which they had been highly competitive when winning a majority government in 2011. The political complexion of small urban and rural-dominated ridings also reflects significant differences between the political profiles of northern and other, relatively remote, predominantly resource dependent regions, especially outside Alberta, and those with a significant agricultural dimension, whether market-based or subject to supply management regimes.

An analysis of the first and final ballot outcomes of the 2017 federal Conservative leadership election suggests that these divisions remained a principal cleavage within the party. Maxime Bernier and Michael Chong were disproportionately successful in the urban cores of major metropolitan areas, particularly on the first ballot, but much less so within their suburban peripheries, which were typically much more competitive, if not always easily defined. Bernier also performed strongly in more remote regions, at least on the first ballot. However, his libertarian policies had much less appeal in large parts of rural and small town Canada – an area which overlaps with large elements of core Tory support as noted in the previous section.

Bernier built a sizeable first-ballot lead in all major urban regions, comprising census metropolitan areas with at least 500,000 residents, as noted in Table 13. Although Scheer was in second place overall across urban regions, social liberal Michael Chong won enough inner-city and university-based ridings to rank second in Metropolitan Toronto and across the eight Ontario cities with populations between 100,000 and 500,000 residents. Social conservative Brad Trost ranked second in Vancouver-Burnaby and Montreal, and a strong third in Metropolitan Toronto, urban elements of the Greater Toronto (905) Area, and outer areas of the Greater Vancouver Regional District. However, Scheer won almost half the first ballot vote in small town Quebec and Saskatchewan, and narrowly edged out Bernier across the rest of small town Canada.

TABLE 13

#### DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST BALLOT VOTES BY LEVELS OF URBANIZATION

Bernier	Scheer	O'Toole	Trost	Chong	Lemieux	Leitch	Raitt
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Major Urban								
* ROC (117)	26.95%	17.04%	9.46%	12.44%	10.83%	7.33%	7.17%	3.25%
* Quebec (40)	47.19%	12.42%	6.18%	8.06%	5.72%	5.30%	7.30%	1.52%
Medium Urban								
* ROC (30)	23.69%	18.78%	13.00%	8.65%	11.96%	8.91%	6.81%	4.50%
* Quebec (5)	46.27%	19.01%	5.88%	3.43%	3.85%	10.12%	3.28%	0.73%
Mixed "Rurban"								
* ROC (27)	25.58%	22.41%	16.16%	7.38%	5.74%	9.11%	6.92%	3.01%
* Quebec (3)	44.29%	35.76%	7.26%	2.09%	0.51%	1.71%	5.49%	1.01%
Small Urban-Rural								
* ROC (86)	24.35%	24.45%	14.02%	6.26%	5.40%	9.09%	7.77%	5.05%
* Quebec (30)	27.32%	48.65%	5.25%	1.14%	0.99%	2.60%	4.74%	0.59%

Table 14

## FINAL BALLOT CONSOLIDATION BY LEVEL OF URBANIZATION

	Scheer			Bernier		
	1st Count	Δ	Final Count	1st Count	Δ	Final Count
Major Urban						
* ROC (117)	17.04%	<b>31.71%</b>	48.75%	26.95%	24.30%	51.25%
* Quebec (40)	12.42%	19.11%	31.53%	47.19%	<b>21.27%</b>	68.47%
Medium Urban						
* ROC (30)	18.78%	<b>35.77%</b>	54.55%	23.69%	21.77%	45.45%
* Quebec (5)	19.01%	18.03%	37.04%	46.27%	16.69%	62.96%
Mixed "Rurban"						
* ROC (27)	22.41%	<b>33.17%</b>	55.58%	25.58%	18.84%	44.42%
* Quebec (3)	35.76%	11.49%	47.25%	44.29%	8.46%	52.75%
Small Urban-Rural						
* ROC (86)	24.45%	<b>33.08%</b>	57.53%	24.35%	18.11%	42.47%
* Quebec (30)	48.65%	<b>14.40%</b>	63.05%	27.32%	9.63%	36.95%

On the final count, summarized in Table 14, Scheer defeated Bernier in 89.5 of 116 ridings classified as “small urban / rural,” although the two candidates were more evenly matched in remote and northern constituencies. Scheer led overall on the final count in regions around Vancouver and in the Greater Toronto Area, along with most medium-sized cities. There are no data to indicate how the ultimate preferences of Chong’s urban supporters were sorted among Bernier, Scheer, and abstention, as 46.1 percent of his remaining support went to O’Toole on the 11<sup>th</sup> count. However, 58.7 percent of Trost’s 11<sup>th</sup> count support and 58.6 percent of O’Toole’s 12<sup>th</sup> count support in Ontario went to Scheer. Ultimately, consolidation of support from other candidates helped Scheer to edge past Bernier by 50.5 percent to 49.5 percent across the 80 ridings of urban Ontario. Bernier won by huge margins in the Montreal region and Quebec City, sizeable margins in Calgary and Edmonton, and more narrowly in Winnipeg.

However, this edge was more than offset by Scheer's substantial margins in smaller cities and mixed rural-urban ridings outside Quebec and small town ridings in most parts of Canada, especially Quebec.

### *Consolidating the Vote*

Thirteen of the fourteen candidates remaining in the race until members voted, even though at least half would fail to win at least five percent of weighted votes cast. As noted above, O'Leary dropped out of the contest too late for removal of his name from the ballot. As Bernier and Scheer accounted for only half the weighted votes on the first ballot, consolidation of remaining contestants' votes became the determining factor in the outcome. Unlike delegated conventions, candidates could exercise little influence over such choices, although some MPs signaled their second choice preferences to their constituents.

Bernier was the leading beneficiary of second-choice votes of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> place candidates, but only the remnant of O'Leary's voters gave him a majority of their support. By the eighth count, after Lisa Raitt was dropped from the ballot, Bernier had only secured 2.35 percentage points, or 28.1 percent of the redistributed votes, compared with 2.03 points (24.3 percent) for Scheer, and 1.72 points (20.6 percent) for O'Toole as noted in Table 15.

Table 15  
Consolidating the Vote

Round		Initial Support	Final support		Initial support	8 <sup>th</sup> count	Δ	Percent of reallocated votes
1	Obhrai	0.41	0.41					
2	Saxton	0.50	0.51	Scheer	21.82	23.85	2.03	24.3%
3	Peterson	0.65	0.67	Bernier	28.89	31.24	2.35	28.1%
4	O'Leary	1.07	1.09	O'Toole	10.65	12.37	1.72	20.6%
5	Alexander	1.12	1.23	Trost	8.35	8.53	0.18	2.2%
6	Blaney	1.26	1.39	Chong	7.55	8.60	1.05	12.6%
7	Raitt	3.34	3.74	Leitch	7.00	7.74	0.74	7.9%
8	Lemieux	7.38	7.67	Lemieux	7.38	7.67	0.29	3.5%
9	Leitch	7.00	7.95					
10	Chong	7.55	9.14					
11	Trost	8.35	14.30					
12	O'Toole	10.65	21.26					

Table 16  
Consolidating the Vote: Rounds 9-13

Round 9	Round 10	Round 11	Round 12	Round 13
Lemieux	Leitch	Chong	Trost	O'Toole

Scheer	2.18%	2.25%	2.00%	8.08%	12.59%
Bernier	0.45%	2.54%	2.34%	3.81%	8.67%
O'Toole	0.42%	1.85%	4.21%	2.41%	
Trost	4.31%	0.87%	0.59%		
Chong	0.10%	0.44%			
Leitch	0.21%				
Total	7.67%	7.95%	9.14%	14.30%	21.26%
Percentage Distribution to:					
Scheer	28.4%	28.3%	21.9%	56.5%	59.2%
Bernier	5.9%	31.9%	25.6%	26.6%	40.8%
O'Toole	5.5%	23.3%	46.1%	16.9%	
Trost	56.2%	10.9%	6.5%		
Chong	1.3%	5.5%			

Table 16 summarizes consolidation in rounds 9 through 13. On rounds 10, 11, and 12, Lemieux's votes went primarily to fellow social conservative Trost (56.2 percent) and Scheer (28.4 percent). Leitch's were scattered among the three front runners. Chong's went primarily to O'Toole (46.1 percent), and Trost's primarily to Scheer (56.5 percent). However, regional bandwagon effects were visible, disproportionately favouring Scheer in Saskatchewan, and moderately favouring Bernier in Quebec and Newfoundland. On the final count, O'Toole's weighted vote split 59 to 41 percent in Scheer's favour, with differences in regional splits favouring Scheer in Saskatchewan and the Maritime provinces and Bernier in Quebec, Newfoundland, and two of the Territories.

Nation-wide, Scheer's average growth in weighted votes between the first and last ballots was 29.1 percent, 44 percent more than Bernier's 20.2 percent (see Table 17). Although Bernier's ability to consolidate second choice votes was closer to Scheer's in Quebec, Newfoundland and the Territories, Scheer's strength as the virtual default choice of Saskatchewan Tories and the consensus repository of second and third choice ballots in the Maritimes were critical to his narrow victory. Ultimately, Scheer's success in navigating the preferential balloting rules with a large, culturally and ideologically fragmented field of candidates was the product a carefully designed strategy to position himself as the principal alternative to Bernier's libertarian policies in Quebec, and a safe second choice for a broad cross-section of Conservative supporters in the rest of the country.

Table 17

Consolidating the Vote: Scheer vs. Bernier

Growth in percentage points by province, territories: Rounds 1-13

Scheer	Bernier	Ratio
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Canada: Total	29.13	20.16	1.44
British Columbia	32.92	22.25	1.48
Alberta	23.28	17.53	1.33
Saskatchewan	26.26	8.04	3.20
Manitoba	31.48	22.15	1.42
Ontario	35.64	23.74	1.50
Quebec	16.70	16.24	1.03
New Brunswick	37.75	17.58	2.15
Nova Scotia	39.93	21.26	1.88
Prince Edward Is.	41.38	14.07	2.94
Nfld & Lab.	27.25	26.79	1.02
Territories	25.14	22.95	1.10

### *Conclusion*

One-member, one vote (OMOV) electoral systems in political parties are calculated to privilege candidates with strong name recognition, organizational networks, and/or the financial capacity to purchase access to such networks through professional political consultants. Absent such candidates, OMOV systems create significant opportunities for celebrity outsider candidates, and other political outsiders capable of appealing to both organized and latent constituencies whose influence might otherwise be limited by existing party elites, especially in opposition parties.

The decision of senior figures in the previous Harper government to seek other personal and political opportunities left the 2017 Conservative leadership race wide open to such candidates: Kevin O’Leary for voters attracted by celebrity and superficial claims of business success,<sup>41</sup> Maxime Bernier for free market purists and other libertarians, Brad Trost and Pierre Lemieux for moral traditionalists, and Kellie Leitch for voters resentful of cultural changes resulting from high levels of immigration. However, the party’s choice of weighted OMOV limited the value of “deep mining” large numbers of latent or marginal party supporters in particular areas in favour of “broadening out” strategies capable of appealing to wider coalitions of party supporters or new adherents across different regions.

O’Leary proved unable or unwilling to engage in the retail politics necessary to cultivate support outside of major urban centres and his social media fans. Bernier, while inheriting an indeterminate amount of O’Leary’s support, alienated enough caucus colleagues and ordinary voters through ideological rigidity<sup>42</sup> and overconfidence that he threw away the opportunity to “close the sale” despite his advantages as the front-runner. Both Andrew Scheer and Erin

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<sup>41</sup> Tim Kiladze (2017), “The truth about Kevin O’Leary’s business history,” *The Globe and Mail*, 19 January, B1.

<sup>42</sup> Radwanski, “The many oddities of the leadership campaign.”

O'Toole carefully pursued strategies of building caucus networks and appealing to broad cross-sections of Conservative partisans and allied interest groups across Canada with a view to securing extensive second-choice support through the preferential ballot system – symbolized by the former's convention button: "Andrew Scheer is my second choice."<sup>43</sup> Scheer established a national advantage on the first ballot, neutralizing Bernier's advantage in Quebec, by allying himself with the province's farm sector and pledging to maintain the Harper government's support for supply management.

Scheer made effective use of the rules to consolidate votes based on his first ballot advantage to squeeze out his narrow victory. He combined the effective mobilization of support in ridings with limited membership levels (see Tables 8 and 9) with the capacity to consolidate sufficient support from supporters of a broad cross section of other candidates to secure a sizeable advantage across Conservative-held ridings (see Table 12), resulting in his 53.0 to 47.0 final ballot lead in the symbolically important metric of actual votes cast.<sup>44</sup> Given the cross-cutting effects of efforts by multiple groups outside the Conservative party to recruit members to influence the outcome of the race, and the tendency of most political organizers to sign up any available "warm body"<sup>45</sup> to vote, regardless of commitment to the party or lack thereof, Bernier's subsequent complaints that "fake Conservatives" swayed the outcome appears to be little more than a well-publicized case of sour grapes.

An overlay of members' votes in each constituency on the proportionate share of Conservative votes from each of Canada's 338 electoral districts in the 2011 and 2015 general elections, thus giving greater weight to urban votes, suggests that using such a proxy would have resulted in similar outcomes, if with slightly larger margins for Scheer: 52.5 to 47.5 percent if based on the Conservative vote from 2015, and 52.3 to 47.7 percent using 2011 election outcomes.

Party activists sometimes complain that allocating 100 votes to each constituency, regardless of turnout, unduly devalues the efforts and votes of committed party activists in ridings large and small, creating the contemporary equivalent of rotten borough capable of distorting the outcome of a nation-wide vote. One option available to the party executive in future is that taken by the Ontario PCs in their 2018 leadership vote: limiting the number of points allocated in such ridings to the actual number of votes cast when turnout is below 100 members. Such an approach would not have altered the outcome of the 2017 Conservative race given Bernier's sizeable advantage in such ridings noted in Table 8, but would have reduced lingering concerns about the fairness of the process.

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<sup>43</sup> Alex Boutilier (2017), "Longtime staff members, friends, drove Andrew Scheer's dream team," *The Toronto Star*, 4 June.

<sup>44</sup> Grenier, "Popular vote numbers reveal wider margin of victory for Scheer."

<sup>45</sup> Cross, *Political Parties*, 83; Mazereeuw, "Digital campaigns say they've convinced thousands ...".

However, by forcing all candidates to compete in areas of relative Conservative weakness, not just strength, and creating incentives to pursue second choice votes from a variety of ideological and interest-based voter outlooks, the Conservatives' weighted OMOV rules also came much closer to simulating the conditions of a general election than a pure OMOV system would have done. Different tactical choices by particular candidates, particularly Bernier and O'Leary, might have altered the outcome of the contest. However, the available evidence suggests that weighted OMOV provided candidates with the incentives necessary to achieve the party's intended objectives of bridging linguistic, regional, cultural, and urban-rural cleavages – at least among its own supporters.

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