The Nature of Representation in Canada, Part II:

Constituency Influence in Parliament

Stuart Soroka
Erin Penner
Kelly Blidook

McGill University

Contact email:
stuart.soroka@mcgill.ca

Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, York University, Toronto ON, June 1-3 2006. This research was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Standard Research Grant. We are very grateful to Denise Ledoux, Peter Niemczak and others at the Library of Parliament, who provided much of the necessary data on MPs and electoral outcomes as well as valuable commentary at an early presentation of these data. We are also indebted to Lori Young, Iris Simixhiu, Marie-Josee Bouffard, Michelle Meyer and Zach Finkelstein, the principle coders on the project; and to the Hons. Warren Allmand, Bill Blaikie, Ed Broadbent, Peter Milliken, and Senator Gerald Comeau, each of whom was kind enough to share with us some of their knowledge of Parliament and Question Period.

This paper examines relationships between constituency characteristics and individual legislators' behavior in a parliamentary system. This kind of *dyadic* representation has received considerable attention in the US, particularly with the study of roll call voting. Outside the US, however, the study of individual representatives' behavior has been more difficult. In many cases, indicators of individuals' behavior have been difficult to attain; moreover, in plurality-elected parliamentary systems with strong party discipline, such as Canada, there are relatively few observable policy venues in which individual legislators have an opportunity for anything other than towing the party line.

The issue of dyadic representation is no less important in Canada, however. Canadians do vote for individual representatives, after all. Nevertheless, and despite its importance to our understanding of the quality and nature of democratic representation, we know very little about the extent to which Canadian legislators demonstrate any degree of dyadic representation. We investigate this possibility here, drawing on an exhaustive dataset of 43,426 oral questions in the Canadian House of Commons (from 1983 to 2004), combined with data on constituency-level demographics and electoral outcomes. The analysis begins with a general model predicting the number of questions an MP will ask in a given Parliament. This model tells us much about how questions are allocated in Question Period, and provides a useful starting point for subsequent models directly analyzing the extent to which individual MPs' questions are guided by constituency characteristics. First, however, we review the relevant literatures on dyadic representation and on the Canadian Parliament.

Dyadic Representation in the Canadian Parliament?

The representation of public preferences is one of the critical features of representative democracy. Dahl's line, "I assume that a key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals" is oft-cited for good reason (Dahl 1971); it nicely identifies the centrality of the opinion-policy link in democratic theory.[1] Pitkin's work on political

[1] Also see Weale 1999.

representation is also influential here. Her "substantive" representation, in which representatives act "…in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (1967:209) has become a defining feature of empirical work on representative democracy.

The means by which substantive representation comes to exist is another matter. One critical question focuses on whether political representation should occur at the level of individual representatives or the system as a whole. There is a strong argument for the latter – that representation, particularly substantive policy representation, is necessarily at the system level. Policy is not the outcome of a single legislator, after all, but an entire policymaking system (see, e.g., Hurley 1982).[2]

Even so, the relationship between an individual representative and her/his geographic constituency is a lynchpin of single-member plurality (SMP) political systems. Voters vote for individuals, and there is a reasonable and widespread expectation that these individuals will represent the preferences of their constituents. This kind of "dyadic" (Weissberg 1978) representation has motivated a vast body of work on roll call voting in the US. The early literature – including Miller and Stokes' (1963) "Constituency Influence in Congress," Mayhew's (1974) *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Clausen's (1973) *How Congressmen Decide*, and Kingdon's (1983) *Congressmen's Voting Decisions* – remains critical. And there is a considerable body of work confirming and extending these authors' evidence that the voting behavior of representatives is driven by some combination of constituency opinion (measured by various means), constituency aggregate demographics, and representatives' own demographic traits and party affiliations.[3]

---

[2] This system-level notion of representation has motivated a vast body of literature in the US, Canada, and elsewhere. See, e.g., Page and Shapiro 1987; Erikson et al 2004; Wlezien 1995, 1996; Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005b; Petry 1999; Petry and Mendelsohn 2004.

[3] See, e.g., Achen 1978; Bartels 1991; Erikson 1978, 1990; Erikson and Wright 1980; 1997, 2000; Fiorina 1974; Kuklinski 1977,1978; McCrone and Kulinski 1979; Shapiro et al. 1990; Stone 1979; Wright 1989; Wright 1989a; 1989b; Wright and Berkman 1986.

The notion of dyadic representation has been given relatively short shrift in Canada. In parliamentary systems, where the legislature and executive are fused, the need for a government to hold the confidence of the legislature can result in relatively strong party cohesiveness, or 'party discipline' (Diermeier and Feddersen 1998; Huber 1996). The potential for representatives to act independently is accordingly relatively limited. This has been seen to be particularly true for Canada, where leaders have considerable power to reward or punish MPs through their control over those MPs' career advancement opportunities (Docherty 1997; Savoie 1999; Carty et al 2000). This further enhances the executive's supremacy over the legislature (Atkinson and Thomas 1993).[4]

Given that the Canadian system allows party leaders to dictate the behaviour of MPs, and the executive to dictate what will be legislated by the House, the Canadian literature has been heavily focused upon institutional structure as the key factor that explains governance (Mallory 1971; Stewart 1977; Franks 1987). The system is regarded as being heavily centralized and leaving little space for any meaningful policy role by MPs (Savoie 1999). Indeed, even in the few cases that MPs receive specific attention for their potential roles as individuals, the story is generally one of institutional constraints (Franks 1987; Docherty 1997).

This is the tone of the existing literature, at least. We are nevertheless not so prepared to dismiss the possibility of dyadic representation. The topic is certainly one of growing relevance to the state of Canadian democracy. Respondents in polls over the past few decades have increasingly indicated that their MPs "lose touch" after being elected, and support for increased independence for MPs appears to indicate a widely held belief that they should have a greater ability to represent those who directly elect them (Blais and Gidengil 1991; Howe and Northrup 2000).

There are at least two additional reasons to expect a certain degree of individual behaviour from MPs. First, Canada's SMP system provides a strong electoral incentive for constituency representation. The possibility of individual electoral victory, despite

[4] Indeed, in recent years Canadian Governments have gone so far as to use confidence measures to ensure favourable vote outcomes in the House, raising rather serious problems for the process of responsible government.

party electoral defeat, as well as considerable local control over the nomination process, creates conditions in which it may be beneficial for a candidate to cultivate an image or message shaped by local – and not party – concerns (Carey and Shugart 1995; see also Strom 1997; Cain et al 1987). Indeed, recent work on constituency service finds that representatives in single-member systems (including Canadian MPs) are more likely to say they have a 'constituency focus' than are representatives in multi-member systems (Heitshusen et al. 2005).[5]

Second, the Canadian legislative process provides a number of venues, outside the largely party-driven legislative votes, in which dyadic constituency representation may be manifest. Oral Question Period is one such venue. Question Period is the most visible part of the Canadian Parliamentary process. Indeed, for most Canadians, Question Period *is* Parliament. It provides a summary indication of those issues most salient to Canadian elected officials; it is a primary venue for 'position taking' on the part of Government and Opposition members alike; and last, but certainly not least, it plays a starring role in nightly newscasts.[6]

Existing research also suggests that Question Period has important institutional functions. Question Period is valuable as (1) a means of ensuring that the Government is held accountable to Parliament, (2) an opportunity for the Opposition to both criticize Government policies and suggest alternatives, and (3) a chance for backbench MPs to gain both experience and publicity (e.g., Franks 1987; Docherty 1997; outside Canada, see also Chester and Bowring 1962; Franklin and Norton 1993). The importance of the venue is buttressed by empirical work suggesting the substantive significance of oral questions in politics and policymaking (e.g., Crimmins and Nesbitt-Larking 1996; Howlett 1998; Soroka 2002a, 2002b).

---

[5] Indeed, research on constituency service, following in large part from Fenno's (1978) influential work, has much to tell us about the extent to which MPs – across various electoral systems – may focus on constituency interests and priorities. See, e.g., Anagnoson 1983; Gaines 1998; Ingall and Crisp 2001; Norris 1997; Studlar and McAllister 1996.

[6] For a discussion of the development and process of Question Period in the Canadian House of Commons, see Penner et al. N.d.

Our focus here is whether and to what extent oral questions are motivated by constituency characteristics. Ideally, we would use constituency policy *preferences*, derived from public opinion polls. We do not have these data at the constituency level, however. Some past work in the US attempts to simulate constituency-level opinion using demographics or voting data.[7] Both methods suffer rather serious reliability and validity problems (see esp. Erikson et al. 1993). We accordingly rely directly on demographic data as an indication of constituency characteristics. These are, we suggest, a reasonable surrogate for preferences, in some policy domains at least.[8] People involved in manufacturing are likely to be more interested in manufacturing, for instance; people in the military are more likely to be concerned with defence policy.

That we are examining oral questions rather than roll call voting helps in one regard: the number of questions on a given issue is an indication of *attentiveness*, and not necessarily the direction of a policy preference. As such, we are attempting to identify the extent to which attentiveness to issues in Question Period is driven by constituency characteristics – constituency characteristics, that is, that suggest the constituency has an interest in those issues. Using demographics as a proxy for attentiveness, or issue salience, perhaps requires a lesser leap of faith than does using demographics as a proxy for directional policy attitudes. We take that leap now.

Data & Methods

Our analyses rely on a content analytic database of all oral questions asked in the House of Commons from mid-1983 (the last Trudeau Government) to 2004 (the end of the last Chrétien Government). This database includes 43,426 oral questions, spanning five Parliaments (32nd to 37th). Issue codes are drawn from the US *Policy Agendas* project,

[7] On estimating opinion based on demographics, see Pool et al 1965; Weber et al 1972;Weber and Shaffer 1972. On estimating opinion using voting data, see Nice 1983; Erikson and Wright 1980.

[8] That various policy preferences are strongly connected to certain demographics – albeit to quite varying degrees depending on the policy and the demographic – is widely recognized. Demographics have certainly played a prominent role in political behaviour research (in the Canadian case, see, e.g., Johnston et al. 1992; Blais et al. 2002). See also the literature on descriptive representation (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995).

though several codes were adjusted to reflect Canadian rather than US policies (e.g., Canada Pension Plan), and several others were added to accommodate uniquely Canadian political issues (e.g., National Unity).[9] In past work, we have used column centimeters to gauge the length of questions (Penner et al., N.d.); in this work, we rely simply on the number of questions asked on a given topic. Indeed, the dataset used here is a collapsed version of the full dataset. Our unit of analysis is Members of Parliament (MPs); we accordingly collapse the full dataset by MP/Parliament combinations. There is one observation, then, for each MP in each Parliament; where MPs are in multiple Parliaments, they appear several times in our dataset. Ed Broadbent, for instance, appears 3 times: once for the 32nd, 33rd, and 34th Parliaments.[10] Given that we have data from six Parliaments, and there are roughly 300 (give or take 20) MPs in each, our sample size is 1885.

For our work below, we merge this Question Period (QP) data with demographic data by Federal Electoral District (FED) from the 1986, 1991, and 1996 Censuses. These data provide most of our demographic surrogates for constituency preferences. In addition, we add some additional codes, such as a variable indicating if an MP's constituency has a military base, as well as data on the MPs themselves, drawn from files provided by the Library of Parliament. These files include data on MP portfolios – both in Cabinet and in the Opposition Shadow Cabinet – which we code using the same *Policy Agendas* coding grid discussed above. Library of Parliament data also include election results for each constituency. These data are critical in our analysis of 'electoral pressure' below.

Our dependent variable is the number of questions on a given topic asked by each MP in each Parliament. The variable is a 'count,' then, and our regression analysis accordingly relies on a negative binomial regression model (NBRM). This estimation procedure is more suitable than OLS for count outcomes, typically characterized by (a) only positive

[9] A list of Canadian topic codes is available from the authors; US topic codes are available via the Policy Agendas Project website (www.policyagendas.org) at the University of Washington.

[10] This raises a problem for our regression estimations, of course, since our cases are not completely independent of each other. We account for this in part by using robust standard errors, where the total number of MPs, rather than the sample size, is used in the estimation of standard errors.

values, (b) many zeros, and (c) a long right-hand tail. That these characteristics apply to our data is clear in Figure 1, which shows histograms of our first dependent variable: the total number of questions asked (on all topics) by MPs.

[Figure 1 about here]

The top panel shows the distribution for all MPs, while the bottom shows the distribution for Opposition MPs only.[11] Government Members typically ask very few questions, so, as expected, there are many 0s and 1s in the top panel. However, even the bottom panel displays a considerable proportion of small values, as well as an extended right-hand tail.[12]

Indeed, initial tests suggest that these data are characterized by 'overdispersion,' where the variance is far greater than the mean (suggesting, of course, the long right-hand tail). It is for this reason that we rely on an NBRM rather than a more standard Poisson regression model; the NBRM is more robust when dependent variables exhibit overdispersion.

We will not describe the NBRM estimation itself in much detail here. In short, the general model is as follows:

$$\mu_i t_i = \left\{\exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{i1} + \beta_2 x_{i2} + ...\beta_k x_{ik} + \varepsilon_i)\right\} \times t_i \quad . \qquad (1)$$

μ is the expected rate, which for our purposes is the number of questions asked by an MP in a Parliament. This rate is a function of various independent variables (βx), an error term, ε, distributed as a gamma distribution, as well as t, the 'exposure time.' In the language of count data models, t represents the amount of time for which a given case was at risk of an event occurring; here, it represents the amount of time (as measured by the numbers of days the House sat in each Parliament) an MP had to ask questions;

[11] To make the illustrations a little clearer, we restrict the cases here to those less than 300. There are in fact four cases in which an MP asked more than 300 questions in a single Parliament. Predictably, these were all party leaders: Ed Broadbent, John Turner, Audrey McLaughlin, and Joe Clark.

[12] The distribution of these and subsequent independent variables, including the number of 0s and 1s, is listed in Appendix Table 1.

accordingly, *t* accounts for the fact that MPs will be able to ask more questions in a given Parliament when that Parliament is longer. In the NBRM, an exponential function ensures that predicted values will be non-negative; estimation is undertaken by maximum likelihood.[13]

As with almost any regression model for categorical variables, interpretation of the coefficients resulting from an NBRM is not straightforward. Thus, in addition to the coefficients themselves, we present the percentage point change in the expected count (μ) given a one-unit shift in x.[14]

Results

We begin our analyses with a relatively simple but revealing model of the total number of questions asked by each MPs in each Parliament. We expect the total number of questions to be driven by the following combination of institutional variables:

Government Member: a binary variable equal to one for all MPs who are part of the party in Government. Unlike other parliamentary systems where oral questions are regularly used by Government backbenchers to solicit information from Government Ministers, Canadian Government MPs ask relatively few oral questions.

Party Proportion: Oral Questions are allocated to opposition parties according to their size in the House; that is, a larger opposition party will receive more questions than a smaller opposition party. Accordingly, we include a variable that is the number of seats an MP's party has in Parliament, as a proportion of all opposition seats. (This variable is equal to zero for all Government MPs.) Party proportion will not have a simple, linear effect on the number of questions asked, however. We expect that initially, as party size (and, consequently, proportion of questions)

[13] For more detailed discussions of NBRMs, see Long and Freese 2003; Cameron and Trivedi 1998.

[14] These are generated using the *SPost* commands in STATA. They are relatively simple to derive from the 'incidence rate ratios' (IRR), another typical means of interpreting NBRM results. The IRR is very similar – both in calculation and interpretation – to an odds-ratio in a binary logistic estimation. It is from the IRRs, essentially, that the percentage-point changes displayed here are derived.

increases, an MP's opportunity to ask questions increases. At the same time, we believe that this opportunity will increase more slowly, and eventually decrease, as the party reaches a certain critical size. This is a simple case of diminishing returns: as the number of people in a party increases, demand for questions will be greater, and the likelihood that any one individual asks many questions starts to decrease. We test this here by including both the linear and quadratic forms of Party Proportion, with the expectation that the first coefficient will be large and positive, and the latter will be small and negative.

Opposition Portfolio: 'Shadow Cabinets' for Opposition parties became formalized in the 35th Parliament; the looser positions of 'chief critics' existed before that time. Our data from the Library of Parliament provide good information on shadow cabinet posts, and more limited information on chief critics before that time. As such, we include a simple binary variable here, equal to one for all Opposition MPs with an official (or, rather, quasi-official) role in a shadow cabinet or as a chief critic. These MPs, we expect, will be allocated more questions in Parliament.

Government Portfolio: This is a similar binary variable for Government Members. Here, we expect the effect to be negative: to the extent that Government Members ask questions at all, Government backbenchers will be more likely to ask these questions than Cabinet Ministers.

[Table 1 about here]

Results of Model 1, using these independent variables, and with the total number of questions asked by an MP in a Parliament as the dependent variable, are listed in Table 1. All variables act as predicted. The percent change for Government Members (in the fourth column of the top row) suggests that the 'expected count' – that is, the number of questions asked in a Parliament – is roughly 77% less for Government Members than for Opposition Members. Having an Opposition portfolio increases the expected count by 41%; having a Government portfolio decreases the expected count by about 53%.

[Figure 1 about here]

The coefficients for Party Proportion are as expected, but difficult to interpret from the table, given that the linear and quadratic variables necessarily have a joint effect. Figure 1 accordingly plots predictions for the expected number of questions, across a range of party sizes (from 10% to 70% of the total Opposition, which is, roughly speaking, the actual range in our data). The figure shows predictions for Opposition MPs both with and without a portfolio. The gap between the two lines is evidence that being responsible for a portfolio increases an MP's number of questions. The non-linear effect of party size is also evident. As a party increases from 10% to 30% of the Opposition, MPs in that party are able to ask more questions. Shortly after 30%, however, the negative impact of the number of MPs in a party starts to overwhelm the positive impact of party size in the legislature. The result is that an MP in a party that forms 60% of the legislature is likely to ask no more questions – indeed, fewer questions – than the same MP in a party that forms 10% of the legislature, *ceteris paribus*.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 presents a similar model for only Opposition MPs to ensure that our results are not being driven by the Government MPs with 0 or 1 question in Parliament. This appears not to be the case: our results are robust and, in fact, most coefficients show very little change.

This model confirms the basic structure of oral questions in the Canadian House of Commons – a structure that we expected given MPs' descriptions of the process. Our goal is to find evidence of constituency influence, however, which is the focus of Table 3. Notice that the dependent variable in Table 3 is the number of question asked by an MP *on a particular issue*. For the preliminary analysis, we focus on six issues. The selected issues are not a random sample; rather, they are a sample of diverse issues for which we believe we have demographic data that adequately capture relevant constituency preferences. The issues we deal with below, and the related constituency-level demographic data, are as follows:[15]

[15] The *Policy Agendas* codes used to identify oral questions are listed in the Appendix.

Topic	*Demographic Predictor*
Defence	Binary variable indicating whether there is a military base in the MP's constituency
Foreign Relations	Immigrant population, as a percent of the total population in the MP's constituency
Foreign Trade	Population employed in manufacturing, as a percent of the total population in the MP's constituency
Computer Industry	Population employed in the high tech industry, as a percent of the total population in the MP's constituency
Fisheries	Population employed in the fishing industry, as a percent of the total population in the MP's constituency
Aboriginal Issues	Aboriginal population, as a percent of the total population in the MP's constituency

The model itself is similar to that in Table 1, though with two sets of additional controls:

Parliaments: Here we include a set of binary variables accounting for the 32nd, 34th, 35th, 36th and 37th Parliaments (the 33rd Parliament is thus the reference category). These parliamentary variables control for changes in issue salience across Parliaments. If a topic is very salient in the 33rd Parliament, for instance, and less salient in the 34th Parliament, this will show up in these coefficients.

Parties: We also include a set of binary variables for the Progressive Conservatives, NDP, Reform/CA, and BQ (the Liberals are the reference category). These variables account for differences in issue salience across parties. The BQ will be more interested in national unity issues, for instance; Reform may be particularly interested in debt and taxes issues; the NDP may be more interested in social programs. Any party differences will show up in this variables.

The Portfolio variable in these models is no longer a dummy variable for any portfolio, but rather a dummy variable equal to one when an MP has a portfolio relevant to the topic at hand. For instance, our Defence model includes a dummy for MPs with a

defence portfolio; our Aboriginal Issues model includes a dummy for MPs with a portfolio related to aboriginal issues.

Finally, each model includes a single constituency-level demographic that – if constituency preferences matter – seems likely to have an effect on MPs' tendency to ask questions on that topic. The coefficients for these variables represent the critical test of dyadic representation. And note that they have a good deal to overcome: we expect these variables to have a significant effect, even after Parliamentary, Party, and other institutional variables are taken into account. Indeed, we expect these variables to be significant even after we control for portfolios. This is an important feature of our models: parties will often allocate portfolios based on constituency interests, of course. A fisheries critic or minister is likely to be from the East or West coast, for instance; an industry critic or minister is likely to be from a high-manufacturing southern Ontario constituency. A good deal of dyadic representation might not be a function of individual MPs' behavior in Parliament, then, but rather a function of parties' rational allocation of portfolios. The former is the kind of dyadic representation for which we are seeking evidence. As such, we control for portfolios in these models, anticipating that the constituency demographic variables will have an effect above and beyond party and institutional variables.

[Table 3 about here]

Results are shown in Tables 3A-F. Parties and Parliaments actually rarely matter to the number of times individual MPs ask questions on particular topics. There are some general trends – discussion of defence issues increases in the 37th Parliament, for instance (with debates centring on Canada's potential military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as working with the US to increase continental defence); discussion of foreign trade was highest in the 34th Parliament (when free trade was a central issue). Also, Reform/CA MPs are more likely to talk about high tech industries than are Liberals; Liberals – who electorally dominate both coasts for this period – are most likely to talk about fisheries. Overall, however, the contribution of these parliamentary and party variables is relatively small. The other institutional controls generally have the

same effect as in Table 1, though the significance of these coefficients is more variable here.

Note that portfolios matter for defence, foreign relations, fisheries and aboriginal issues; they do not matter for either foreign trade or the computer industry. This is perhaps expected. Foreign trade will matter a good deal to a great number of MPs and, thus, a portfolio may not have a significant effect on whether an MP asks a question on this topic. Where the computer industry is concerned, the relevant portfolios capture a much broader topic, and ministers/critics may accordingly be focusing on other things.

Most importantly, and in contrast to much of what has been written about Canadian MPs, constituency preferences have a noticeable – and in some cases considerable – effect on MPs' legislative behaviour. More precisely, each of our demographic proxies for constituency preferences have a powerful effect on MPs' propensity to ask questions on these topics. Results for the demographic variables, shown in the next-to-last rows of Tables 3A-F, can be summarized as follows:

- Having a military base in an MP's constituency increases the number of defence-related questions by about 84%.
- A standard-deviation (13-point) increase in the percent immigrant population in an MP's constituency increases the number of foreign affairs-related questions by about 66%.
- A standard-deviation (8.1-point) increase in the percent manufacturing employees in an MP's constituency increases the number of foreign trade-related questions by about 47%.
- A standard-deviation (2.3-point) increase in the percent high tech employees in an MP's constituency increases the number of computer industry -related questions by about 119%.
- A standard-deviation (1.4-point) increase in the percent of fishing employees in an MP's constituency increases the number of fisheries-related questions by about 130%.

- A standard-deviation (7.7-point) increase in the aboriginal population in an MP's constituency increases the number of aboriginal issues-related questions by about 87%.

These are results from a rather select number of issues, of course, so we should be careful not to take them as evidence of strong dyadic representation on all matters. Given the tone of the Canadian literature thus far, however, these findings are striking.

That said, it remains possible that this apparently constituency-driven behaviour is not so much active representation as it is a product of constituency electorates successfully electing MPs who are demographically-representative of the constituency. That is, we cannot distinguish between (a) an MP who pays attention to fisheries policy because s/he represents a constituency with many fishermen, and (b) an MP who pays attention to fisheries because s/he (or someone in their family) used to fish. Practically speaking, this may not matter very much – in either case, constituency preferences are being represented in Parliament. Insofar as we are interested in gauging the extent of active representation in a party-focused Parliamentary system, however, the issue is of some importance.

One way to try to find evidence of active representation is to search for effects of 'electoral pressure.'[16] If acting in a representative fashion increases an MP's chance at re-election, then we may find that those more concerned about losing the next election are more active in representing their constituency. Finding evidence of this would provide some evidence that behaviour in Question Period is motivated by constituency policy preferences, rather than just an MP's policy preferences.

Our preliminary test of this hypothesis takes the form of a revised model of the total number of questions asked in a Parliament. This time, however, we include a variable for the share by which a candidate won their constituency in the last election. We expect MPs to ask more questions – about any topic – when they are more concerned about their re-election. We do not know whether 'Win Share' will have the same effect on Government and Opposition MPs, so we include it separately for each. In both cases,

[16] Another is to control for MP's own demographic traits and experience. Our data are relatively limited in this regard, though this is certainly an avenue for future analysis.

however, we expect that Win Share will be negatively related to the number of questions asked in Parliament, *ceteris paribus*.

[Table 4 about here]

Results in Table 4 provide only partial evidence of our hypothesis regarding electoral pressure. There is no significant effect of Win Share on Opposition MPs. It may be that Opposition parties are focusing on future national campaigns (and bids for Government), and consequently more likely to feature prominent, powerful, and perhaps election-safe MPs in Question Period.[17]

The story for Government MPs is quite different. Cabinet members ask very few questions, but backbenchers do. And it appears in Table 4 as though Government MPs are much more likely to ask questions when they face a tighter electoral race. One interpretation is that electoral pressure motivates Government MPs to ask more questions; alternatively, the governing party allocates more questions to Members who seem to need the publicity. Either way, these findings suggest that electoral pressure can affect legislative behaviour, and perhaps some indirect evidence that MPs' questions are motivated not just by their own interests, but by their constituency's interests as well.

Conclusions

There is a vast body of literature suggesting an absence of dyadic representation in Canada. This literature is – in part at least – wrong. In the Canadian Parliamentary system, legislation necessarily comes out of Cabinet. Parliament can pass it, or not. But there exist policy venues in which individual MPs can have at least an indirect effect on legislative (or electoral) outcomes. Question Period represents one such venue, and there is evidence here that, above and beyond institutional and party effects, MPs' behaviour is at least partly driven by constituency characteristics.

This is the principal contribution of this paper, we hope: reviving the notion that individual MPs matter in the Canadian policy process and, more broadly, that there can be an element of dyadic legislative representation in a party-centred Parliamentary

[17] It is also the case that Opposition parties' first questions almost always go to the party leader.

system. In searching for evidence of this, we have also painted (albeit with rather broad strokes) a picture of how oral questions work in the Canadian House of Commons. Government membership, party size, and Government and Opposition portfolios affect MPs' prominence in Question Period in systematic ways. And, for Government Members at least, electoral pressure can be a powerful motivator towards at least one form of legislative action.

It goes without saying that future work is required to properly identify the relationships between constituency preferences and the legislative behaviour of Canadian MPs. Where our data are concerned, we intend to further probe the extent to which we can account for oral questions with constituency characteristics, and start to get a more general sense for the scope of dyadic representation in Canada. For the time being, we are content to provide preliminary evidence that this kind of representation exists. The questions MPs ask in Parliament are – it appears – regularly motivated by constituency characteristics.

Bibliography

Achen, Christopher H. 1978. "Measuring Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 22:475-510.

Anagnoson, J. Theodore. 1983. "Home Style in New Zealand." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 8(2): 157-75.

Atkinson, Michael M., and Paul G. Thomas. 1993. Studying the Canadian Parliament. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 18 (3):423-451.

Bartels, Larry M. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Build Up." *American Political Science Review* 85(2):457-474.

Blais, André, and Elisabeth Gidengil. 1991. *Making representative democracy work : the views of Canadians*, *Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing* Ottawa: Canada Communication Group Supply and Services Canada and Dundurn Press.

Blais, Andre, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte. 2002. *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election*. Toronto: Broadview Press.

Cain, Bruce, John Ferejohn and Morris Fiorina. 1987. *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Cambridge and Long: Harvard University Press.

Cameron, A.C and P.K. Trivedi. 1998. *Regression Analysis of Count Data*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carey, John M. and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Votes: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas." *Electoral Studies* 14(4):417-39.

Carty, R. Kenneth, Lisa Young, and William P. Cross. 2000. *Rebuilding Canadian party politics*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Chester, Daniel N. and Nona Bowring. 1962. *Questions in Parliament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Clausen, Aage R. 1973. *How Congressmen Decide: A Policy Focus*. New York: St. Martin's.

Crimmins, James E. and Paul Nesbitt-Larking. 1996. Canadian Prime Ministers in the House of Commons. *Journal of Legislative Studies* 2(3): 145-71.

Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. UBC Press.

Docherty, David Campbell. 1997. *Mr. Smith goes to Ottawa : life in the House of Commons*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Erikson, Robert S., and Gerald C. Wright. 2000. "Representation of Constitution Ideology in Congress" in David W. Brady, John F. Cogan, and Morris P. Fiorina, Eds. *Continuity and Change in House Elections*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

————. 1997. "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections." in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, Eds. *Congress Reconsidered*, 6th ed, Washington, DC: C.Q. Press.

————. 1980. “Policy Representation of Constituent Interests.” *Political Behaviour* 2(1): 91-106.

Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Erikson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright and John P. McIver. 1993. *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little Brown.

Fiorina, Morris P. 1974. *Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies*. Lexington MA: Lexington Books.

Franklin, Mark N. and Philip Norton (eds.). 1993. *Parliamentary Questions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Franks, C.E.S. 1987. *The Parliament of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Gaines, Brian. 1998. “The Impersonal Vote? Constituency Service and Incumbency Advantage in British Elections, 1950-1992.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23(2): 167-95.

Heitshusen, Valeri, Garry Young and David M. Wood. 2005. “Electoral Context and MP Constituency Focus in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdon.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(1): 32-45.

Howe, Paul, and David Northrup. 2000. Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The views of Canadians. *Policy Matters* 1:1-104.

Howlett, Michael. 1998. Predictable and Unpredictable Policy Windows: Institutional and Exogenous Correlates of Canadian Federal Agenda-Setting. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 31(3): 495-524.

Huber, John D. 1996. The Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies. *American Political Science Review* 90 (2):269-282.

Hurley, Patricia A. 1982. “Collective Representation Reappraised.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 7(1):119-136.

Ingall, Rachel and Brian Crisp. 2001. “Determinants of Home Style: The Many Incentives for Going Home in Columbia.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26(3): 487-512.

Johnston, Richard, Andre Blais, Henry E. Brady and Jean Crete. 1992. *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Kingdon, John W. 1973. *Congressmen’s Voting Decisions*. New York: Harper and Row.

Kuklinski, James H. 1977. “District Competitiveness and Legislative Roll Call Behavior: A Reassessment of the Marginality Hypothesis.” *American Journal of Political Science* 20:627-638.

————. 1978. “Representation and Elections: A Policy Analysis.” *American Political Science Review* 72:165-177.

Long, J. Scott and Jeremy Freese. 2003. *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata*. College Station, Texas: Stata Press.

Mallory, J. R. 1971. *The structure of Canadian government*. Toronto,: Macmillan of Canada.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.'" *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628-657.

Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: the Electoral Connection.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

McCrone, Donald J. and James H. Kuklinski. 1979. "The Delegate Theory of Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 23:278-300.

Nice, David C. 1983. "Representation in the States: Policymaking and Ideology." *Social Science Quarterly* 64: 404-11.

Norris, Pippa. 1997. "The Puzzle of Constituency Service." *Journal of Legislative Studies* 3(2): 29-49.

Petry, Francois. 1999. "The Opinion-Policy Relationship in Canada." *Journal of Politics* 61: 540-550.

Penner, Erin, Kelly Blidook and Stuart Soroka. N.d. "Legislative Priorities and Public Opinion: Representation of Partisan Agendas in the Canadian House of Commons." Forthcoming in the *Journal of European Public Policy*.

Petry, Francois and Matthew Mendelsohn. N.d. 2005. "Public Opinion and Policy Making in Canada, 1995-2001." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming.

Phillips, Anne. 1995. *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *Theories of Representation*.

Pool, Ithiel de Sola, Robert P. A, and Samuel Popkin. 1965. *Candidates, Issues, and Strategies: A Computer Simulation of the 1960 and 1964 Presidential Elections."* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Savoie, Donald J. 1999. *Governing from the centre : the concentration of power in Canadian politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Stewart, John B. 1977. *The Canadian House of Commons : procedure and reform*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Shapiro, Catherine R., David W. Brady, Richard A. Brody, and John A. Ferejohn. 1990. "Linking Constituency Opinion and Senate Voting Scores: A Hybrid Explanation." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15(4):599-621.

Soroka, Stuart N. 2002a. *Agenda-Setting Dynamics in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

———— 2002b. Issue Attributes and Agenda-Setting by Media, the Public and Policymakers in Canada. *International Journal of a Public Opinion Research* 14(3): 264-285.

Soroka, Stuart N. and Christopher Wlezien. 2005. “Opinion-Policy Dynamics: Public Preferences and Public Expenditure in the United Kingdom.” *British Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming.

———. 2004. “Opinion Representation and Policy Feedback: Canada in Comparative Perspective" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 37(3): 531-60.

Stewart, John B. 1977. *The Canadian House of Commons : procedure and reform*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Stone, Walter J. 1979. “Measuring Constituency-Representative Linkages: Problems and Prospects.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 4(4): 623-639.

Strom, Kaare. 1997. “Rules, Reasons, and Routines: Legislative Roles in Parliamentary Democracies.” *Journal of Legislative Studies* 3(1): 155-74.

Studlar, Donley and Ian McAllister. 1996. “Constituency Activity and Representational Roles among Australian Legislators.” *Journal of Politics* 58(1): 69-90.

Weale, Albert. 1999. *Democracy*. New York: St. Martin’s.

Weber, Ronald E., and William R. Shaffer. 1972. “Public Opinion and American State Policy Making. *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 16: 633-99.

Weber, Ronald E., Anne H. Hopkins, Michael L. Mezey, and Frank Munger. 1972. “Computer Simulation of State Electorates.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36: 49-65.

Weissberg, Robert. 1978. “Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress.” *American Political Science Review* 72:535-47.

———. 1996. "Dynamics of Representation: The Case of U.S. Spending on Defense." *British Journal of Political Science* 26:81-103.

———. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 39:981-1000.

Wright, Gerald C. 1989a. “Policy Voting in the U.S. Senate: Who is Represented?” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14:465-486.

———. 1989b. “Level-of-Analysis Effects on Explanations of Voting: The Case of U.S. Senate Elections.” *British Journal of Political Science* 18: 381-98.

Wright, Gerald C. and Michael B. Berkman, “Candidates and Policy in U.S. Senatorial Elections.” *American Political Science Review* 80: 576-90.

Appendix

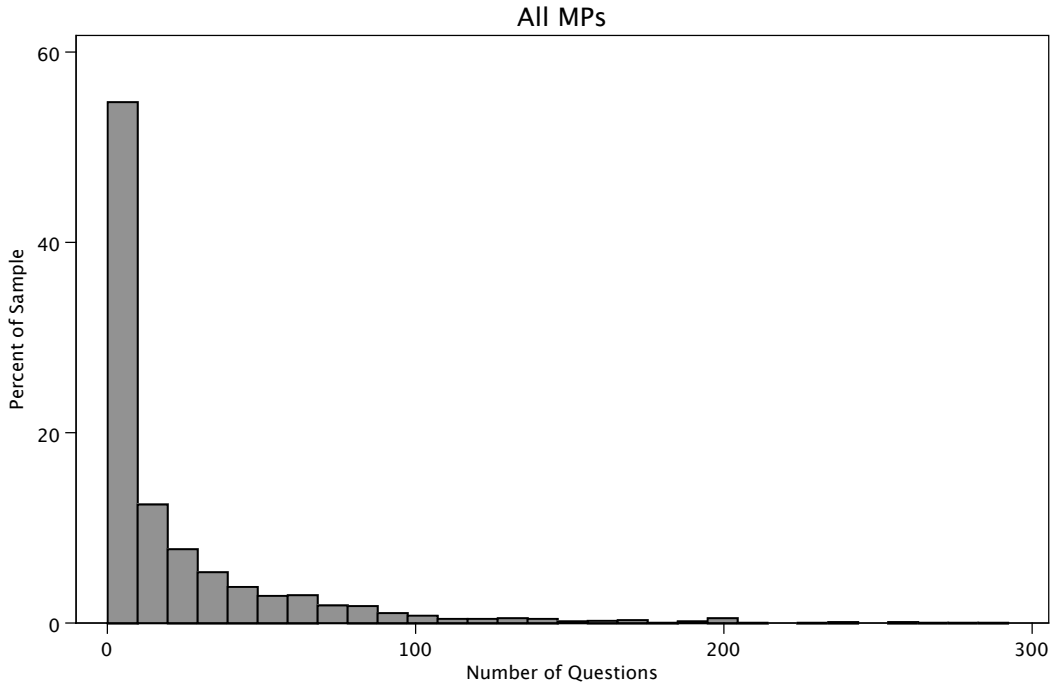
Appendix Table 1. Descriptives for Dependent Variables

	Number of…			
	0s	1s	>1s	Mean
Total Questions Asked	483	113	1289	24.343
Total Questions Asked (Opp. only)	28	6	733	51.411
Defence	1391	201	293	1.326
Foreign Relations	1681	110	94	.228
Foreign Trade	1783	73	29	.086
Computer Industry	1849	25	11	.031
Fisheries	1631	97	157	.647
Aboriginal Issues	1616	130	139	.531

Issue Codes

Defence: 16 Defence
Foreign Relations: 1901 Foreign Aid, and 1925 Human Rights
Foreign Trade: 1807 Tariff and Import Restrictions, Import Regulation
Computer Industry: 1709 Computer Industry and Computer Security
Fisheries: 9 Fisheries
Aboriginal Issues: 27 Aboriginal Issues
The full Canadian version of the Policy Agendas codebook is available upon request.

Figure 1. Total Number of Questions, per Parliament



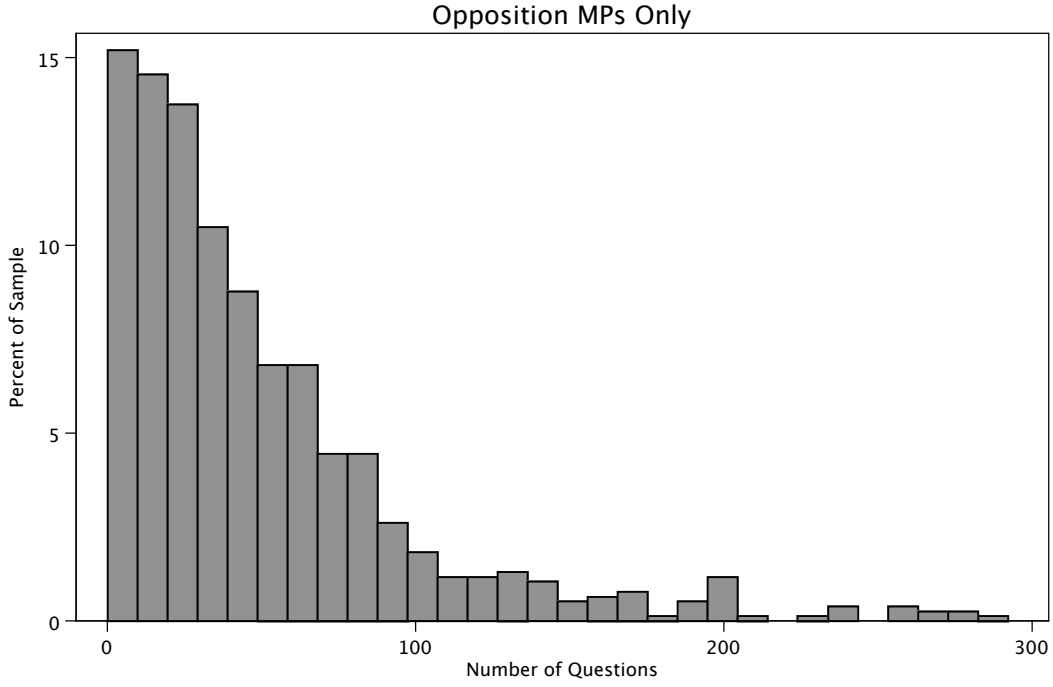


Figure 2. Predicted number of questions

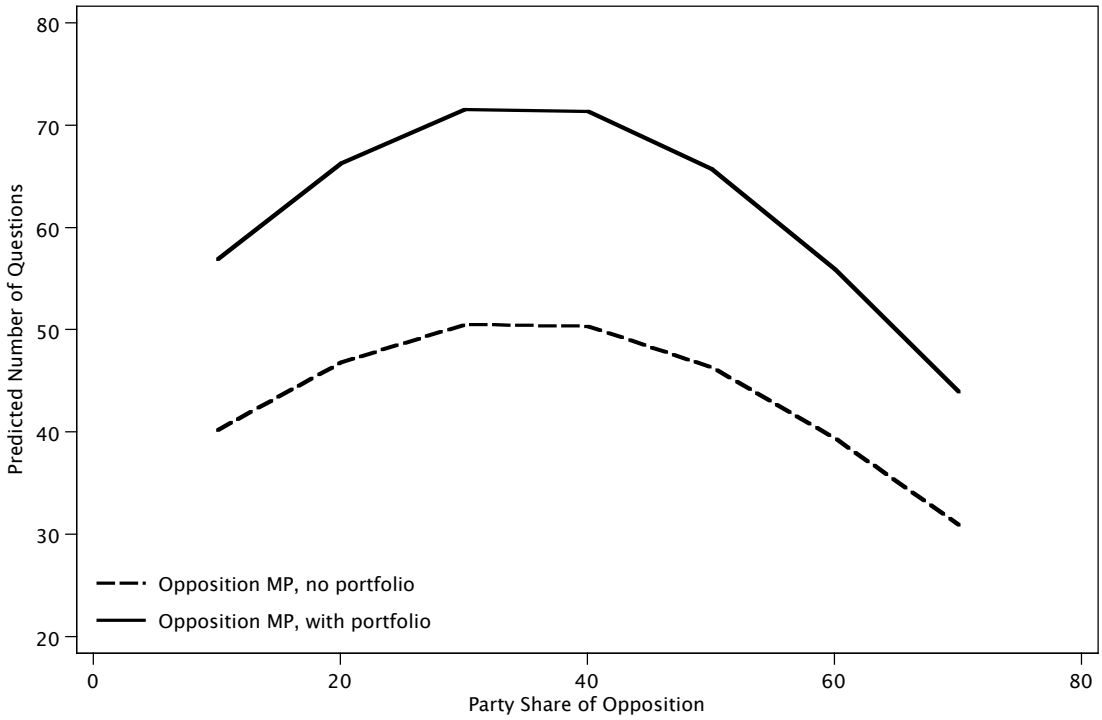


Table 1. The total number of questions

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
Government Member	-1.458***	(.189)	76.7
Party Proportion	.028***	(.008)	2.8
Party Proportion^2	-.0004***	(.000)	-0.0
Opposition Portfolio	.344***	(.095)	41.0
Government Portfolio	-.745***	(.081)	-52.5
Constant	-2.673***	(.181)	——
(N)	(1885)		
LR chi^2	1022.99***		
alpha [a]	1.598	(.061)	

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

[a] likelihood-ratio test that alpha=0: chi^2 = 32000, p < .001.

Cells contain results from a negative binomial regression model, estimated in STATA and supplemented with SPost commands. ß is the coefficient; $SE_ß$ is the standard error of the coefficient; % is the percent change in the expected count, given a one-unit shift in *x*.

Table 2. The total number of questions, Opposition MPs only

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
Party Proportion	.027***	(.006)	2.8
Party Proportion^2	-.0004***	(.000)	-51.6
Opposition Portfolio	.342***	(.066)	40.8
Constant	-2.670***	(.127)	——
(N)	(767)		
LR chi^2	78.50***		
alpha [a]	.764	.039	

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

[a] likelihood-ratio test that alpha=0: chi^2 = 23000, p < .001.

Cells contain results from a negative binomial regression model, estimated in STATA and supplemented with SPost commands. ß is the coefficient; $SE_ß$ is the standard error of the coefficient; % is the percent change in the expected count, given a one-unit shift in *x*.

Table 3. Constituency Influence?

3A. Defence

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
32nd Parliament	-.473	(.261)	-37.7
34th Parliament	-.705**	(.337)	-5.6
35th Parliament	.313	(.415)	36.7
36th Parliament	.301	(.418)	35.2
37th Parliament	.709*	(.305)	103.1
Party: PC	.365	(.222)	44.0
Party: NDP	.025	(.327)	2.5
Party: Reform/CA	-.641	(.339)	-47.3
Party: BQ	-.568	(.343)	-43.3
Government Member	-1.876**	(.591)	-84.7
Party Proportion	.051	(.039)	5.2
Party Proportion^2	-.001	(.000)	-.1
Portfolio	1.414***	(.177)	311.4
Military Base	.608***	(.258)	83.6
Constant	-6.024***	(.814)	——
(N)	(1867)		
LR chi^2	437.31***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Cells contain results from a negative binomial regression model, estimated in STATA and supplemented with SPost commands. ß is the coefficient; $SE_ß$ is the standard error of the coefficient; % is the percent change in the expected count, given a one-unit shift in *x*.

3B. Foreign Affairs

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
32nd Parliament	-2.083**	(.086)	-87.5
34th Parliament	-.672*	(.171)	-48.9
35th Parliament	-.703	(.272)	-5.5
36th Parliament	-.163	(.479)	-15.0
37th Parliament	.277	(.767)	31.9
Party: PC	-.267	(.370)	-23.5
Party: NDP	-.596	(.304)	-44.9
Party: Reform/CA	-1.372	(.155)	-74.6
Party: BQ	-.356	(.409)	-29.9
Government Member	-1.340	(.246)	-73.8
Party Proportion	.053	(.059)	5.4
Party Proportion^2	-.001	(.001)	-.1
Portfolio	1.382***	(1.191)	298.1
% Immigrants	.039***	(.008)	3.9
Constant	1.039***	(.008)	——
(N)	(1839)		
LR chi^2	188.81***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

See notes for Table 3A, above.

Table 3. continued

3C. Foreign Trade

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
32nd Parliament	-.847*	(.435)	-57.1
34th Parliament	-.607	(.370)	-45.5
35th Parliament	-2.152***	(.671)	-88.4
36th Parliament	-1.104	(.711)	-66.9
37th Parliament	-.816	(.575)	-55.8
Party: PC	-.511	(.466)	-4.0
Party: NDP	-.178	(.485)	-16.3
Party: Reform/CA	-1.700*	(.820)	-81.7
Party: BQ	-.191	(.689)	-17.4
Government Member	-1.374	(1.029)	-74.7
Party Proportion	.029	(.059)	2.9
Party Proportion^2	.000	(.001)	.0
Portfolio	.535	(.490)	7.7
% Manufacturing	.048***	(.014)	4.9
Constant	-8.053	(1.426)	——
(N)	(1839)		
LR chi^2	111.45***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001
See notes for Table 3A, above.

3D. Computer Industry

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
32nd Parliament	-2.138	(622.151)	-10.0
34th Parliament	.641	(2.534)	89.8
35th Parliament	4.729*	(2.190)	11222.3
36th Parliament	6.931**	(2.282)	102261.1
37th Parliament	3.756	(2.269)	4178.7
Party: PC	.985	(1.667)	167.9
Party: NDP	.571	(2.092)	76.9
Party: Reform/CA	1.763	(2.192)	483.1
Party: BQ	3.291	(2.227)	2586.4
Government Member	-2.674	(3.306)	-93.1
Party Proportion	-.354	(.256)	-29.8
Party Proportion^2	.006	(.004)	.6
Portfolio	.650	(.718)	91.6
% High Tech	.335*	(.157)	39.8
Constant	13.428**	(4.844)	——
(N)	(1839)		
LR chi^2	72.68***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001
See notes for Table 3A, above.

Table 3. continued

3E. Fisheries

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
32nd Parliament	.289	(.485)	33.6
34th Parliament	——		——
35th Parliament	1.063	(.553)	189.6
36th Parliament	.917	(.572)	15.3
37th Parliament	.840	(.605)	131.7
Party: PC	-.033	(.509)	-3.2
Party: NDP	-.281	(.480)	-24.5
Party: Reform/CA	-1.371*	(.637)	-74.6
Party: BQ	-1.466*	(.593)	-76.9
Government Member	-1.785	(1.102)	-83.2
Party Proportion	.075	(.069)	7.8
Party Proportion^2	-.001	(.001)	-.1
Portfolio	1.860***	(.394)	542.1
% Fishing	.595***	(.069)	81.3
Constant	-7.789***	(1.550)	——
(N)	(1535)		
LR chi^2	296.28***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001
See notes for Table 3A, above.

3F. Aboriginal Issues

	ß	$SE_ß$	%
32nd Parliament	.415	(.398)	51.5
34th Parliament	.442	(.285)	55.7
35th Parliament	.591	(.432)	8.6
36th Parliament	.863*	(.428)	137.0
37th Parliament	.297	(.465)	34.5
Party: PC	.597	(.321)	81.7
Party: NDP	.225	(.431)	25.2
Party: Reform/CA	.006	(.516)	.6
Party: BQ	-.147	(.540)	-13.7
Government Member	-.798	(.717)	-55.0
Party Proportion	.106**	(.045)	11.2
Party Proportion^2	-.001**	(.001)	-.1
Portfolio	.798*	(.417)	122.1
% Aboriginals	.081***	(.013)	8.4
Constant	-8.910***	(.977)	——
(N)	(1839)		
LR chi^2	327.15***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001
See notes for Table 3A, above.

Table 4. The effect of electoral pressure

	ß	$SE_{ß}$	%
Government Member	−1.222***	(.198)	−70.5
Party Proportion	.024**	(.009)	2.4
Party Proportion^2	.000***	(.000)	0.0
Opposition Portfolio	.298**	(.099)	34.7
Government Portfolio	−.700***	(.081)	−50.3
Win Share (Govt)	−1.079***	(.227)	−66.0
Win Share (Opp)	.519	(.335)	68.1
Constant	2.656***	(.182)	——
(N)	(1885)		
LR chi^2	1047.05***		

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Cells contain results from a negative binomial regression model, estimated in STATA and supplemented with SPost commands. ß is the coefficient; $SE_{ß}$ is the standard error of the coefficient; % is the percent change in the expected count, given a one-unit shift in *x*.