

# **From advertising to zone houses: A look at candidates' campaign spending in the 2006 Canadian election**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The recent Liberal sponsorship scandal was a reminder that Canadians ought to be concerned about political parties' ties with communications professionals. It is a longstanding practice that public relations, advertising, and now marketing experts assist office-seekers during elections. In return better opportunities to receive more lucrative contracts may emerge afterwards.

Political scientists' macro-level analyses of campaign spending have provided valuable quantitative insights into campaigning. For individual candidates, these studies tend to summarize expenditures in categories such as "radio/TV advertising," which means that the actual supplier named for each financial transaction is not considered. So exactly which companies are providing party candidates with communications services?

This paper illustrates the usefulness of considering the suppliers identified in federal election candidates' expenditure declarations that are filed with Elections Canada. Keyword searches and a visual review of hundreds of election returns of the main political parties' candidates in the 2006 Canadian general election are supported by background information gathered online. The data help to document the kinds of local electioneering present during a winter campaign, to compile a modern inventory of the variety of promotional activities in electoral districts, and to substantiate the existence of political consultants working for multiple party candidates.

## **“From advertising to zone houses: A look at candidates’ campaign spending in the 2006 Canadian election”**

All told, election candidates in Canada usually spend more money locally than the political parties do nationally. Yet it is not abundantly clear what local spending power really buys in electoral districts during a federal campaign. We can look at macro statistical analyses of expenditures (such as the many works of Munroe Eagles) and we can draw inferences from qualitative case studies (such as Anthony Sayers’ description of British Columbia in 1988). We can consider a myriad of practitioners’ writings, features in the news media, and even personal observations. But what is missing from the literature is a descriptive compilation of the promotional activities that constituency campaigns across Canada feel are worth investing their precious financial resources in.

The sponsorship scandal involving advertising agencies in Quebec funneling government funds back to the Liberal party is a reminder of the importance of scrutinizing the suppliers of goods and services to political parties. After all, as Young has pointed out, campaign financing transparency helps to reduce influence on politicians and improves public confidence in our elected representatives (Young, 1993). Public interest in spending behaviour is therefore two-pronged: any curiosity with how politicians distribute their campaign money must be tempered by a concern about the extent of their financial relationship with these recipients.

### **Legal Framework for Constituency Expenses**

The election spending of Canadian federal candidates is heavily regulated.<sup>1</sup> Although the country’s campaign finance regulations have tightened considerably since 1867, rules were often ignored until the *Election Expenses Act (1974)*, a guiding piece of legislation that reflects Canadians’ suspicion of money in politics. A key feature of the *Act* is that candidates’ spending is limited, but those attaining a minimum vote threshold qualify for a partial reimbursement from the state, as long as an audited expense declaration is submitted. More recently, in response to the sponsorship scandal a sweeping reform of the legal relationships between federal politicians, lobbyists, and donors was introduced through the *Federal Accountability Act (2006)*. That *Act*’s prohibition of campaign donations from corporate, trade union and unincorporated associations has greatly reduced opportunities for corruption, although the potential for collusion remains.<sup>2</sup> That said, regulations alone are unlikely to bring politicians’ behaviour in line with public expectations (Atkinson and Bierling, 2005), or to sufficiently dissuade electors’ concerns about conflict of interest, gifts, patronage, and lying (Mancuso et al., 1998). Moreover, it is largely left up to constituency campaign teams to choose which organizations benefit from their spending.

Each Canadian federal electoral district has a candidate spending limit that is calculated, in part, based on the number of electors in the riding (advocacy groups’ spending is also restricted but is not dealt with here); this is increased when there is an average of less than 10 electors per square kilometre. In the 2006 campaign, the amount that candidates were allowed to spend ranged between \$62,210 (Malpeque, PEI) and \$106,290 (Peace River, AB). Efforts to control spending begin at the point that individuals come forward to represent a political party.

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<sup>1</sup> This practice is often disputed although generally accepted (for example, Palda, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Ewing (1992: 209) has written about similar restrictions in the United States that have contributed to political influence shifting to political action committees (also Smith and Bakvis, 2000).

At the nomination stage, all candidates must appoint an official agent who authorizes all campaign revenues and expenditures. The agent of the individual going on to represent the party in the general election is required to submit a post-election itemized description of all financial transactions (known as a return) to Elections Canada. In 2006 there were two key financial incentives for doing this: the \$1,000 nomination deposit was refunded and candidates earning at least 10 percent of the vote were reimbursed 60 percent of their eligible expenditures. The former has been a filing incentive for weak campaigns while the latter has likely encouraged more successful campaigns to comply.

### **The Dataset & Analysis Approach**

Expenditure data analysis is an increasingly practised method of evaluating hundreds of simultaneous campaigns. Denver and Hands (1993) have suggested that this is the best substitute if a direct measurement of local campaigning is unavailable. Carty and Eagles (2003) have shown that examining local campaign activity across the country can unearth patterns along geographic, socio-economic and ethno-linguistic lines. Moreover, they have demonstrated correlations between the amount spent and the margin of victory (Eagles, 2004; Carty and Eagles, 2005). They have also written that looking at candidates' finances provides "the sharpest insight into the impact and distinctiveness of constituency-level forces in Canadian politics" (Carty and Eagles, 2005: 27).

In 2006, election expenses during the official campaign period were itemized in Part 3a of the candidate's return, formally known as the "Statement of Electoral Campaign Expenses." Each entry was assigned a number, date of the transaction, listed the supplier of the goods or services, provided a cheque and/or voucher number, and identified the amount paid (and/or actual commercial value). Auditors chose whether to list each expenditure entry in one of the following seven categories subject to the limit: radio/TV advertising; other advertising; election survey research; office rent, heat and light expenses; other office expenses including telephone; salaries and wages; or, miscellaneous expenses. Aggregate financial data in these categories are what academics have focused on when performing campaign expenditure analysis.

Textual entries in the supplier column have always received far less attention than the numerical data. There has been some preoccupation with the definition of what constitutes an eligible election expense (Stanbury, 1993) and analyses have drawn upon either a candidate's total spending or spending within each of the Part 3a categories (known as Part 11 before 2004). These data form a reasonable synopsis of campaigning by candidates seeking election in electoral districts. True, activities that involve no declared cost (notably door knocking) are not reflected, and there are presumably reporting inaccuracies. For most Canadian expenditure studies, there is the legitimate concern that campaigns qualifying for a partial refund may understate or overstate their expenditures (Taylor, 1972).<sup>3</sup> Overstated expenditures have tended to be found only among campaigns needing to reach minimums to obtain an expenditure rebate (Stanbury, 1993), although in 2000 many Bloc Québécois candidates colluded to achieve the maximum possible refund for the party using a tactic they nicknamed "La Méthode In and Out" (McIntosh, 2003). Moreover Cross (2004: 142) advises that all political finance rules have weaknesses which will be "routinely subverted by ever more creative methods on the part of

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<sup>3</sup> A colourful case of underreporting existed in the 1962 Eglinton election, where the Liberals and Conservatives each collected and spent suspiciously similar amounts that were likely only half of the real total (Land, 1965).

those dependent on it.” In this respect, analyzing the textual entries may improve upon the measurement of spending data alone.

My initial research plan was to analyze supplier entries by repeating the keyword analysis I previously conducted for all candidates in the 2000 general election (Marland, 2005). For instance, using keywords such as “consult,” I was able to document the existence of political consultants (previously assumed to be a rare species locally in Canada) who were working with multiple party candidates within a single region.<sup>4</sup> This process is inexact and involves some data cleaning. To illustrate, hundreds of suppliers can be identified using the keyword “comm” (short for communications), but many of the results—such as chambers of **commerce**, telephone **communications**, and the Toronto Transit **Commission**—are extraneous compared to an entry such as Flip **Communications & Stratégies**.

Regrettably, Elections Canada now requires that data for each candidate be individually downloaded from the organization’s Web site.<sup>5</sup> Given that there were 1,634 candidates with many thousands of expenditure line items in 2006, performing a search, select, copy and paste function for each candidate would be a time-consuming undertaking. Consequently I deviated from my planned research approach and had serendipitous results. I proceeded to compile the Part 3a data only for parties that ran candidates in all 308 electoral districts (Conservative, Green, Liberal, New Democratic) and the 75 Bloc Québécois candidates in Quebec.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, I became intrigued as each individual candidate’s statement appeared on my computer screen. I found myself wondering if the NDP caused any misunderstanding in Nova Scotia when, in a riding adjacent its former leader Alexa McDonough (Halifax), it fielded a candidate named Alexis MacDonald (Central Nova). There must also have been some eyebrows raised in Saskatchewan when John A. Macdonald—a candidate bearing the same name as Canada’s first Prime Minister—was resurrected to run for the Green party in Desnethé--Missinippi--Churchill River.

Excited by such qualitative happenstance I decided to support the keyword search of suppliers with a visual review of the thousands of entries and, where appropriate, to gain further information using the Internet search engine Google.<sup>7</sup> By looking at the names of entries—without worrying about the category that auditors placed the expenses in or the financial amounts themselves—we can get a feel for the range of grassroots electioneering activities across Canada. In particular, I was concerned with three research questions: What kinds of winter electioneering emerged? What types of promotional activities occurred locally? Were there many instances of campaigns hiring the same suppliers in an apparently coordinated manner?

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<sup>4</sup> Cross (2004) has also noted that constituency campaigns are becoming regionalized.

<sup>5</sup> Electronic datasets used to be received on CD-ROMs. Currently, these are only available online on a searchable candidate-by-candidate basis for general elections since 1993 and for by-elections since 1997. Although this is an improvement over the photocopied format of a generation ago it is nevertheless a needlessly painstaking process for researchers.

<sup>6</sup> This totalled 1,307 candidates. The remaining candidates were either affiliated with fringe parties such as the Marxist-Leninists and the Animal Alliance Environment Voters party, or else they were independents. My analysis in 2000 similarly found that many such people declare no expenditures whatsoever.

<sup>7</sup> In this paper I sometimes identify the declared dollar amounts rather than the percentage spent of the maximum allowable amount. However the financial data are incidental to my primary focus of shedding light on the suppliers themselves.

## Findings

### a) Winter Campaigning

The 2006 campaign spanned 56 days from November 29, 2005 to January 23, 2006 and concluded with Canadians replacing Liberal Paul Martin as Prime Minister with Conservative Stephen Harper. The campaign was 20 days longer than usual to accommodate winter electioneering during a holiday period. The notion of an election during a Canadian winter conjures up frosty images of candidates trekking through snowbanks, volunteers staying away, and considerably lower turnout on Election Day (for example, LeDuc and Pammett, 2006).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the period encompassed Chanukah, Christmas and New Year's, which meant that for several campaign weeks electors were out shopping for gifts, socializing with loved ones, and feeling particularly indifferent towards politics. Indeed, there are a number of seasonal issues that could have impacted campaigning in the 39th general election. We might expect less signage on account of frozen ground, snowfall and obscured visibility. There was probably less door knocking because of reduced daylight hours, slippery sidewalks and preoccupied electors. Without evidence we can only speculate just as political commentators did when the election writ was dropped.

Unseasonably mild weather (Weeks, 2006) indicates that it was the Christmas interlude and not freezing temperatures or snow which had the most significant impact on campaigning activity. Party leaders and candidates tended to considerably reduce or even shut down operations between December 24 and January 3. Some local outfits purchased newspaper advertisements extending holiday greetings and assuring the public that electioneering would be put on hold until the New Year. Others decreased their canvassing, cut back on their office staffing, and focused on sign distribution. Some candidates reportedly helped to serve Christmas dinner with local charitable organizations and some attended New Year's Eve parties (Kent, 2005; Nolan, 2005; Welch, 2005). Those searching for votes during the last week of December likely visited areas where electors gathered indoors, such as shopping malls, coffee shops and retirement homes. In the New Year, a renewed emphasis on distributing lawn signs seemed to emerge, and more volunteers pitched in because so many of them had postponed participating (Sadava, 2006).

In a typical Canadian election, the bulk of candidates' expenditures tend to be on non-broadcast advertising, followed by office expenses, and then on salaries. But any such focus on quantity can overlook important details. For instance, a number of campaign teams spent money at Tim Horton's coffee and donut restaurants in 2006. Given the time of year, it is sensible that campaigners would mingle in such public places where electors were also stopping by to warm up. Could it be that, on the ground, the 2006 campaign was a coffeehouse election?

Tim Horton's appearance as a supplier in candidates' financial returns can act as a barometer of coffeehouse electioneering. In financial terms not much money was spent—a total of just over \$4,600 by the five major parties' candidates, about a third of which was spent by Harper's team alone in Calgary Southwest. Then again, this represents thousands of cups of coffee and the data show that there were visits to this franchise in every province across Canada. Yet only 38 candidates declared spending time at Tim's: 22 Conservatives and 10 Liberals, with

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<sup>8</sup> Note that in the subsequent Quebec provincial election of March 2007 at least one party leader developed a cold, travel plans were interrupted, a seniors' services company offered free rides to the polls, and some snowbird retirees relocated to Florida.

the remaining six candidates were from the other three parties. There were many blends other than Tim Horton's that could be considered, including the Swweet Retreats Internet Café (South Shore--St. Margaret's, NS), socializing in the Williams Coffee Pub (Whitby--Oshawa, ON), supplying coffee for volunteers at campaign headquarters, advertising in coffeehouse weeklies such as the *Coffee News*, or even renting office space from Coffee Time (Scarborough Centre, ON). Of course, the spending declarations show that there were hundreds of visits to cafés, fast food establishments, Royal Canadian Legions, watering holes and sit-down restaurants. This confirms candidates' glad-handing in public places and that campaigners work up appetites. That said, the reality is that coffeehouse electioneering is hardly a winter-specific activity; Harper, for instance, had previously participated in a photo opportunity at a Tim Horton's in Guelph in July 2005 (*Guelph Mercury*, 2005).

Yet the review of suppliers does indicate some electioneering which was particularly unique to a winter campaign. Some constituency campaigners engaged in snowmobile tours. Some advertised in local ice hockey publications and gave money to youth hockey tournaments. Some groups went curling, one went bowling, and one appears to have rented a hot tub. Newspaper ads wished electors a Merry Christmas, some outfits distributed Christmas calendars, and the Bloc Québécois in Shefford sponsored Opération Nez Rouge (a Christmas designated driver campaign). Given the time of year, it is reasonable to assume that purchases of sand, landscaping and excavating services were for snow clearing at the campaign headquarters. Of course, all of this must be juxtaposed against the campaigns in notoriously balmy British Columbia that declared use of their local golf club and purchases from umbrella stores!

#### **b) Office, Travel and Staffing**

The most vibrant local organizations typically rent office space so that they can set up a visible campaign headquarters that becomes the nucleus of their electioneering activities. There are many variations, including multiple offices scattered throughout a geographically vast riding, coordinating poll work out of volunteers' homes (what Sayers calls "zone houses"), and simply working with family members out of the candidate's basement (Sayers, 1999).

The review of suppliers in 2006 provides a level of insight about campaign offices not normally described. Once offices were rented many required new locks from locksmiths and were outfitted with security alarm services. Carpeting and rented furniture may have been next, followed by business machines such as computers, photocopiers and faxes, as well as perhaps kitchen appliances; sometimes these required moving services. Telephone, Internet, cable and satellite television services were hooked up. Routine office supplies (printer toner was popular) were gathered at business stores. Stamps were purchased and couriers were hired. Since it was a winter campaign there were office heat bills too.

We can also picture what kinds of comforts were available to campaign workers. Bottled water was provided with surprising regularity, which may have been supplemented by soft drinks, and occasionally a tippie of wine, liquor or beer. Staff bought supermarket groceries, ate pizza, fried chicken and Chinese food, and ordered cakes. Routine services were purchased when volunteers were unavailable: the office and its windows may have been professionally cleaned, computers were often repaired, electricians were hired, and on at least one occasion a plumber was contracted. When the campaign was over, a number of offices paid for public storage space, while others hired a shredding company. Perhaps the most common office expenditure, though, entailed paying service fees to banks.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, candidates could bank on having to travel uncomfortably by horse, by boat, or by rail. In 2006, mileage was calculated on personal vehicles or else one was rented from a local dealership. Gasoline and insurance expenses were regularly billed. In compressed urban areas, some candidates paid parking fees, took taxis, or rode the subway. In geographically large districts, tickets were purchased for bus coaches, for the train, for commercial airlines, for charter flights and even for helicopters. Bridge toll fees were paid, overnight accommodations were declared, and at least one campaign appears to have rented a motor home. Unfortunately for some travellers there were also unplanned expenses such as parking tickets and auto glass repair.

Such technological change was felt in other areas of local campaigning. In 2000, the cellular telephone had emerged as a relatively common mobile communications device in electoral districts, and by the 2004 campaign the BlackBerry mobile e-mail phone had caught on among incumbents (Marland, 2005). In 2006, all types of mobile phone service and long distance charges were regularly billed, often in sizeable amounts. In a continuing trend, some volunteers were compensated for using their own portable phones, rather than being supplied with them by the campaign organization.

While the level of sophistication of these communications devices in 2006 is unclear campaigns were considerably more prone to using e-commerce than they had previously. There were a variety of online purchases which will undoubtedly increase in frequency and type over time. It was not unusual for printing services or signage to be purchased from an Internet business. A number of them even used the PayPal electronic payment system. Some Green candidates bought campaign buttons from the universal goodsforgreens.com while several other Greens were set up to receive donations through the online credit card processing services of International Automatic Transaction Service. One Liberal drew upon eSignsCanada.ca, whose product offerings include storefront signs, portable displays and digital signs (using flat screen monitors); another Liberal bought from Embroidme.com which embroiders clothing and promotional products; and two Liberals on Prince Edward Island hired a Web-based training company.

Training may have been needed on PEI but on the whole constituency campaigns have been adjusting to a declining pool of volunteers. The absence of free and/or skilled labour has professionalized even the weakest of organizations (such as paying for literature distribution and phone canvassing) or else an activity is performed less frequently (notably door-to-door canvassing). The review of suppliers shows that volunteer training sessions were delivered in various parts of Canada in 2006 but many hundreds of individuals were paid for work.

It is not unusual for financial professionals such as auditors, official agents, and accountants to be compensated. Graphic designers, language translators and event speakers were remunerated. The hiring of telemarketing firms to administer the telephone canvass appears to be quite common<sup>9</sup> as does giving many individuals small sums of money (most likely for work as scrutineers on Election Day). Drivers were compensated, perhaps with a flat gasoline rate for signage distribution and removal, with a mileage rate, or a fee for providing transportation for supporters on Election Day. There were also instances of paying for babysitting. The local labour

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<sup>9</sup> That one Liberal (York West) hired a financial collection agency apparently for its call centre demonstrates the flexibility of businesses offering these services.

shortage is evident given that some campaigns went through temporary staffing agencies such as Quality Staffing and 4-Hire Consulting Inc. A placement agency for persons with disabilities received over \$10,000 from a Conservative team in Edmonton. At the end sometimes security services had to be hired for a victory party and in one case a “party maid” was compensated for cleaning up.

### c) Promotional Activities

Compiling an inventory of promotional activities can provide us with a deeper understanding of what political actors do to generate and sustain electors’ awareness.<sup>10</sup> Television may have transformed the national campaign, but locally the medium remains inefficient because it is expensive, and it reaches far outside an electoral district’s boundaries. Many campaigners have therefore continued to emphasize traditional tactics such as knocking on electors’ doors, distributing brochures, and advertising in community newspapers or on local radio. This is often spiced with nimble opportunities such as attending a local debate, issuing news releases, or perhaps posting a campaign blog.

As anticipated, there was a wide range of promotional suppliers for candidates in 2006. Sometimes decision makers paid for media monitoring and news release distribution. Many declared the photocopying of flyers at local rapid coping centres and occasionally thermographers were commissioned to provide embossed printing. Media events were coordinated as well. Hotel space, community centre facilities and banquet halls were rented. Perhaps a room was secured for a news conference or maybe a convention centre was booked for the party leader’s visit. Ambiance was provided by musicians and disc jockeys (in one case a high school band was compensated and in another a community jazz band) while attendees dined on catered food. Audio equipment was rented and sometimes even the dining tables were too.

There was certainly an abundance of print media declared. Advertisements were taken out in mass publications such as *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and in community papers such as the *Journal Haute-Côte-Nord*. Many ads were targeted at narrow markets, including in ethnic by-weeklies such as *The Ukrainian News*, in trade publications such as *Voice of the Farmer*, in classified advertising weeklies such as *The Pennysaver*, in by-monthly magazines such as *Global Eyes*, and even in lifestyle magazines such as *Forever Young* with circulation on both sides of the Canada-US border. Ads appeared in publications focusing on entertainment such as *Ottawa Weekend*, on an age cohort such as *Thunder Bay Seniors*, in a university paper such as the *Charlatan*, and on religion such as *The Jewish Post & News*. Sometimes the area of distribution was tightly contained within a riding, as was the case with free publications such as Toronto’s *Hi-Rise Community Newspaper* for apartments and townhouses.

Broadcast advertising appeared much less frequently than print but did include mainstream radio outlets like Durham Radio, ethnic outlets such as Desh Punjab Radio or Native Communications Inc., community stations such as CFR in Saskatoon, and sports stations such as Team 990. The recording of radio ads at sound studios was billed. Occasionally, local cable television advertising was purchased (such as for a programming listings channel) or ads on ethnic programming such as *Radio et Television Arabe au Canada*. One NDP campaign (Lethbridge, AB) reported advertising at a movie theatre.

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<sup>10</sup> For a useful summary of party politicking, see Carty et al. (2000).



Online media were used locally but these continue to be a work-in-progress. Site design, domain name registration, and hosting services were often commissioned. Candidates may have supplemented national party Web site efforts by launching their own site. These tended to be designed locally but development services were purchased online (such as from Worldprofit.com). In some instances, there were indications of Webcasting (through Yahoo Broadcasting), although on the whole online advertising appeared infrequently as a line item. Sometimes such ads were purchased on local news Web sites such as LTVNews.com in Sault Ste. Marie and other times ads appeared on more topical sites such as the Election Prediction Project.

We might also expect that there would be considerably fewer lawn signs in use during a winter election despite local campaigners' "signs-first" budgetary approach (Marland, 2005). Signs are seen as an integral means of generating candidate name recognition, of suggesting competitiveness, and of building momentum. They are uncomplicated and reusable, and save repeat campaigns money, effort, and time. Certainly many returns declared signage supplies such as lumber and rebar for stakes. As mentioned, signs were purchased online (such as from eSignsCanada.ca), but other options existed too. Roadside advertising may have included large permanent billboard structures (sometimes known as horizontal posters), mini-billboards, mobile billboards, mobile light-up signs, or transit signs. Some suppliers sold sign advertising in shopping malls, backlit posters, painted wall murals, and airport advertising, although it is unclear which (if any) of these specialty types were actually purchased from the suppliers listed.

Once again this method unearthed a fascinating range of peripheral activities declared by local party outfits. For instance, a Liberal in Edmonton advertised using a cold air inflatable balloon company's services. Campaigns across the country rented party supplies and tents, bought greeting cards, and sent flowers to funeral homes. Political paraphernalia was purchased from flag shops, button stores, photographers, trophy engraving stores and sticker suppliers. Automobiles were decorated, nametags were worn, and business cards were handed out. Clothing was a popular item, with workers often receiving embroidered and screen printed T-shirts and hats. Candidates purchased business clothing, bought attire from dress shops, and had their garments taken to the drycleaners. Some of them billed for having their hair cut and in one case a pair of eyeglasses was declared. It is not clear if an instance of repaired dentures was coordinated for a candidate, however.

#### **d) Advertising Agencies and Communications Suppliers**

Advertising can be produced in-house by party workers, in conjunction with media consultants, or it can be wholly outsourced to a commercial agency. Campaign teams often lack professional communications expertise and so in Canada advertising agencies have been involved in politics since at least the 1917 general election when the Conservatives worked with one (Kline et al., 1991).<sup>11</sup> This tends to involve professionals from various employers working together until they return to their regular jobs at the end of the campaign. However, their formal presence at the national level varies. A plethora of expertise is available when the party is contending for government, a single consultant is on hand if the party is struggling to maintain official party status in the House of Commons (12 seats), and no such experts may be linked to a party that has never elected an MP.

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<sup>11</sup> By the 1970s, the Liberals formed an in-house political advertising agency, as did the Conservatives (McDowall, 1982).

The existence of these relationships is well known and is certainly not exclusive to Canada. This symbiotic association has seen advertising agencies provide their expertise during election campaigns and, particularly in the case of the governing party, be rewarded with more lucrative or prestigious contracts afterwards. Cross (2004: 124) has explained that consulting and public affairs suppliers can “trade on their political connections in seeking private-sector clients and in competing for government contracts” if they are involved in a winning campaign. Moreover, within the Gomery Report into the Quebec sponsorship scandal, an “unholy alliance” between politicians and advertising agencies is described as involving a “wink, wink, nudge, nudge” relationship (Sadinsky and Gussman, 2006: 305). With expanding transparency there should be a corresponding decline in this traditional behaviour and new regulations may hinder any *pro bono* work. So to what extent did local candidates have connections with communications professionals in 2006? If, as Carty (2002) suggests, most local candidates are merely franchisees of the central party then we should find similarities in election suppliers along party lines.

I proceeded to use keyword searches for the five parties’ candidates to serve as a barometer of communications services activity. For simplicity a minimum \$500 expenditure threshold was used and, drawing on a combination of the obvious and some Internet research, whittled down each compilation. Table 1 provides data on communications suppliers identified as dealing with five or more candidates in the 2006 campaign. This includes evidence that political parties’ constituency organizations collaborated with each other, sometimes within the same city or province, and that they commanded party loyalty from their chosen supplier. Six Conservative candidates in Alberta drew upon the services of the same local marketing consultants and five Liberals in Nova Scotia dealt with an online store selling campaign products. In one case, a Conservative incumbent owned the firm that provided services to two-dozen Conservative candidates across the country.

The clearest instance of party coordination of supplier services involved a call centre named First Contact. All told nearly \$1.1 million was paid by 80 Liberal candidates to this company, which bills itself as being “the leading Canadian supplier of call centre services to Liberal candidates and office-holders” and whose Web site is peppered with testimonials from Liberal campaign managers.<sup>12</sup> The company’s services include membership recruitment drives, pre-writ calling, identifying sign locations and voters, persuasion calling, and contacting supporters on advance polling and election days. First Contact also offers data services, such as list management, acquiring telephone numbers, and (according to its Web site) assigning values for each voter regarding their “probability of voting Liberal”.

However political parties did not receive exclusive treatment from all suppliers and sometimes they worked with the same company as an opponent did. Three parties’ candidates paid for the outdoor signage advertising services of a Winnipeg-based supplier, for instance. Another business, VoterTrack, dealt with fifteen Conservative campaigns and a single Liberal. The company advocates targeting electioneering by using computer software to track and manage support levels, voter issues, volunteers, donors, signage, donations and expenses.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “Who we are—Call First Contact” [Web site]; available from [www.callfirstcontact.com](http://www.callfirstcontact.com); Internet: accessed 18 Apr. 2007.

<sup>13</sup> “VoterTrack Online Political Campaign Management” [Web site]; available from [www.votertrack.com](http://www.votertrack.com); Internet: accessed 18 Apr. 2007.

Campaign workers can access a “web-based campaign manager” centralized database from almost anywhere in the riding using cable Voice over Internet Protocol which stores information about each elector (Mercer, 2005). VoterTrack sold “voice broadcasts” (commonly known as robocalls or autodialers) involving the dispatch of a pre-recorded telephone message to thousands of households. It also offers automated surveys (whereby electors can participate using a touch-tone phone), incoming voicemail messages that can be sent as text to an email address, and technological tools for canvassing (e.g., bar codes, handheld data entry devices).

This particular measure suggests that collaboration in selecting communications suppliers was common only in the Conservative and Liberal parties. It also indicates that such coordination is less frequent in Quebec and in Newfoundland & Labrador. Finally, it seems that candidates are more likely to use the same calling centre than, say, the same brochure printer. Perhaps this is due to availability of supply, simplicity for decision-makers, and economies of scale (e.g., use of an identical telephone script). It likely also reflects options recommended by parties’ regional campaign chairs and interactions between party workers in neighbouring electoral districts.

**Table 1**  
**Communications Suppliers in Candidates' Statement of Electoral Campaign Expenses, 2006 (5 or more candidates)**

Supplier <sup>a</sup> (number of campaigns)	Party	Province (n)	Mean \$ <sup>b</sup>	Comment
3D Contact Inc. (24)	Conservative Party of Canada (CPC)	BC (3), AB (5), SK (3), MB (3), ON (7), QC (1), NB (1), NS (1)	\$1,184	Marketing communications and polling firm owned by Conservative MP in Nepean-Carleton (but not used in Ottawa area).
Benchmark Advertising Ltd. (7)	3 LPC, 3 CPC, 1 NDP	MB	\$2,284	Outdoor advertising services.
First Contact Voter Contact Management (80)	Liberal Party of Canada (LPC)	BC (10), AB (3), SK (1), MB (3), ON (59), NS (4)	\$13,644	Liberal-affiliated call centre.
MKM Margaret Kool Marketing Inc. (6)	CPC	AB	\$6,976	Edmonton-based marketing consultants.
Policomm (6)	LPC	ON	\$11,095	Involved in such aggressive tactics that the company has opted to have no telephone directory listing (Saunders, 1999).
The Campaign Store (5)	LPC	NS	\$2,951	US-based online store selling campaign products, including stickers, signs, publications and mailing lists.
The Responsive Marketing Group (7)	CPC	BC (1), ON (6)	\$6,224	Offers voter contact programs by telephone.
Voter Identification Solutions Inc. (8)	LCP	BC (1), AB (1), SK (3), MB (1), ON (2)	\$1,620	Saskatoon-based firm that offers a voter contact program.
Voter Track (16)	15 CPC, 1 LPC (in ON)	MB (1), ON (15)	\$3,276	An American autodialer services firm that has a Toronto office.

<sup>a</sup>Suppliers with at least one \$500 entry and at least one of the following keywords were considered for inclusion: advert, campaign, comm, consult, contact, market, media, public, research, strat, voice, voter.

<sup>b</sup>The rounded average of the total dollar amount declared by each constituency campaign.

The data presented in Table 2 identify which communications suppliers captured by this measure dealt with two to four candidates. This tended to occur in the same geographical area, with the Conservative and Liberal party candidates still collaborating with far more frequency, although the Bloc Québécois and Green parties do appear. There were exceptions, but party-supplier exclusivity was commonplace, particularly as larger sums of money were spent. We can see that supplier coordination was often concentrated within a single city or province and that this was particularly evident in smaller jurisdictions such as Prince Edward Island.

There is further evidence that some candidates had close personal ties not only with one another but with the firms they hired. In two cases (involving BQ and Green candidates) a candidate hired a supplier that he worked for and appears to have encouraged a fellow party candidate to hire that supplier too. In another case, Bald Eagle Consulting provided marketing services in Newmarket--Aurora (ON) and in Kings--Hants (NS), two ridings that were over 1,700km apart. Both of those incumbent MPs (Belinda Stronach and Scott Brison) were former Tory leadership contenders who sought re-election in 2006 as Liberal Cabinet ministers. Bald Eagle had managed Stronach's online campaigning when she was the local Conservative candidate in the 2004 election.<sup>14</sup>

It is also interesting to observe the range of communications services that Canadian constituency campaigns paid for in 2006. Old standbys of promotional products and media buying were used. Technological skills such as graphic and Web site design were purchased. More complex services included obtaining direct marketing lists, coordinating quantitative and automated survey research, and robocalling. There were also unidentified services provided by other advertising agencies and marketing communications professionals.

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<sup>14</sup> Bald Eagle Consulting, "Pith and vinegar perspectives" [newsletter online]; available from [www.baldeagleconsulting.com/PDF/P&V\\_Fall\\_2004.pdf](http://www.baldeagleconsulting.com/PDF/P&V_Fall_2004.pdf); Internet: accessed 26 Apr. 2007.

**Table 2**  
**Communications Suppliers in Candidates' Statement of Electoral Campaign Expenses, 2006 (2 to 4 candidates)**

Supplier <sup>a</sup> (number of campaigns)	Party	Province (n)	Mean \$ <sup>b</sup>	Comment
Acrobat Research Ltd. (2)	CPC	ON	\$12,678	Conducts quantitative survey research.
Advertising Images Inc. (4)	LPC	AB	\$416	Sells promotional products such as calendars.
Bald Eagle Consulting (2)	LPC	ON (1), NS (1)	\$2,173	Marketing services company.
Earle Communications Inc. (3)	CPC	ON	\$7,527	No supplementary information found online.
Flip Communications & Stratégies Inc. (2)	BQ	QC	\$13,189	Communications agency; one candidate was an employee.
Graphic Communications Group Inc. (2)	CPC	PEI	\$31,923	Marketing and graphic design company.
Hollinshed Research Group Inc. (3)	2 CPC, 1 LPC	ON	\$6,292	Conducts quantitative survey research.
iTrend Research Group Inc. (2)	CPC	BC	\$6,474	Conducts quantitative survey research.
Ledbetter Communications (2)	LPC	SK	\$1,364	Graphic and Web site design firm.
Marketeks (4)	CPC	ON	\$3,064	Print, promotional and design services.
MJS Marketing & Productions (2)	1 CPC, 1 LPC	PEI	\$7,005	Graphic design firm; received \$13,476 from the CPC and \$535 from the LPC.
NOW Communications Group (3)	NDP	SK (1), NS (1), YK (1)	\$3,170	Social marketing and communications firm.
Platine Stratégie & Publicité (2)	LPC	QC	\$6,099	Advertising agency.
Prairie Advertising Ltd. (3)	2 CPC, 1 LPC	SK	\$7,523	Direct marketing specialists (lists, labelling).
Quest Advertising Agency (2)	NDP	BC	\$1,942	Ad agency with publicly known NDP ties.
Resource Marketing Associates Inc. (2)	CPC	PEI	\$6,160	Advertising agency.
Results Marketing and Advertising (4)	LPC	PEI	\$3,366	Marketing services firm.
Tactical Advantage Campaigns Inc. (4)	CPC	BC (1), AB (3)	\$4,129	Robocalling services.
TeleResearch Inc. (2)	CPC	AB (1), SK (1)	\$803	Conducts quantitative survey research.
Tiger Advertising (2)	GPC	ON	\$2,416	One candidate ran the advertising and photography firm.
Treehouse Media Inc. (4)	CPC	BC	\$11,960	Media buying firm.
Triomphe marketing et communication (2)	LPC	QC	\$7,647	Marketing services firm.
Ventriloquist Voice Solutions International Inc. (2)	1 CPC, 1 LPC	MB (1), ON (1)	\$828	Sells "permission based voice broadcasting" (robocalls).
Voicelink Inc. (2)	CPC	BC (1), NS (1)	\$2,675	Sells automated speech recognition technology to survey voters by phone.

<sup>a</sup>Suppliers with at least one \$500 entry and at least one of the following keywords were considered for inclusion: advert, campaign, comm, consult, contact, market, media, public, research, strat, voice, voter.

<sup>b</sup>The rounded average of the total dollar amount declared by each constituency campaign.

Table 3 presents data involving communications suppliers who only had one client in the 2006 election and who billed at least \$5,000. We can see that nearly all of them worked for either the Conservative or Liberal parties (with two NDP) across Canada in all regions. We can also infer based on earlier tabular data that candidates in PEI opt to collaborate. In some cases, the amount committed to a single supplier must have been nearly half of the campaign's allowable limit, and generally speaking, single suppliers were tiny operations compared to the firms hired by multiple party candidates. They tended to have less of an online presence (sometimes none at all) and appear to have ranged from being communications boutiques, industry specialists, and perhaps even *ad hoc* suppliers (i.e., individual consultants). The range of services provided was further diversified, including translation, fundraising, and event management support. One company had branches in Canada's three territories and offered services in Inuktitut. As well, business connections with a candidate continued to exist, with the Conservatives in Jonquière--Alma (QC) hiring a communications firm that was named after their candidate. A cursory review of the dozens of suppliers receiving less than \$5,000 (not shown) indicates that they offered a similarly diverse range of services.

As is customary, sometimes suppliers appear to have benefited from their relationship after the election. For instance a communications firm was remunerated \$1,236 for working on the 2006 campaign of the St. John's South--Mount Pearl incumbent and, five months after that Conservative MP became Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, that supplier received a \$14,800 information technology consulting contract from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.<sup>15</sup> Another interesting example of sustained relations involves InCiteVision communications which provided Web site and graphic design services to two Liberal candidates in Ontario during the campaign. A year later, the firm counted Liberal MPs, the Ontario wing of the party, and a party leadership candidate among its Web site clients.<sup>16</sup> Suppliers that provided services to a party's candidates across multiple elections existed as well. My previous review of suppliers in 2000 identified an Edmonton-based public relations and Internet communications firm named First Past the Post. That year, the company was hired by nine Canadian Alliance party candidates, seven of whom were in Alberta. Six years and a party merger later the same firm was listed as providing services to the Conservatives in Edmonton--Sherwood Park.<sup>17</sup> Yet, naturally, such continuity does not always occur; a supplier named voteready.com that had sold political canvassing tracking software in 2000 did not appear in the 2006 declarations and no longer existed when checked online in 2007.

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<sup>15</sup> Fisheries and Oceans Canada, "Disclosure of Contracts" [Web site]; available from [www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/PD-CP/2007Q1RA\\_D\\_E.asp?r=fp802-6-0042](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/PD-CP/2007Q1RA_D_E.asp?r=fp802-6-0042); Internet: accessed 25 Apr. 2007.

<sup>16</sup> It also offered "MP Packages" consisting of Web site design and access to a television studio to record online video messages. "The House has returned—does your MP have a website & TV presence?" [Web site]; available from [www.incitevision.com/mppack.aspx](http://www.incitevision.com/mppack.aspx); Internet: accessed 25 Apr. 2007.

<sup>17</sup> In April 2007 the firm's Web site displayed an image of the election Web site they prepared for that candidate, promoted images of personal sites designed for three local Conservative MPs, and included a testimonial from the Conservative MP for Edmonton--Spruce Grove. "First Past the Post" [Web site]; available from [www.prguys.com](http://www.prguys.com); Internet: accessed 25 Apr. 2007.

**Table 3**  
**Communications Suppliers in Candidates' Statement of Electoral Campaign Expenses, 2006 (one candidate only)**

Supplier <sup>a</sup>	Party	Electoral District (province)	Amount (\$)	Comment
Admin Public Affairs Incl	Cons	Regina--Qu'Appelle (SK)	\$6,420	No online information found.
Altar Media	Libs	Peterborough (ON)	\$5,991	Graphic design services firm.
Atmosphere Communications	Cons	Madawaska--Restigouche (NB)	\$16,437	Small communications firm.
BC Media Group Inc.	Libs	Newton--North Delta (BC)	\$11,359	Advertising agency.
Bell Strategic Inc.	Lib	Beauséjour (NB)	\$28,623	Small communications firm.
Bernier Renauld Communications Marketing Inc.	Cons	Joliette (QC)	\$7,097	Advertising agency.
Blackburn-Communications inc	Cons	Jonquière--Alma (QC)	\$5,417	Firm's namesake was its president and the Conservative candidate.
Calder Bateman Communications	Libs	Edmonton Centre (AB)	\$41,814	Edmonton-based communications firm.
CIS Communications Inc.	Libs	Edmonton East (AB)	\$13,278	Edmonton-based communications firm.
Consultant R. Duquette	Libs	Abitibi--Témiscamingue (QC)	\$5,981	Small local firm.
Cusmano Communications Inc.	Libs	Saint-Léonard--Saint-Michel (QC)	\$9,633	Translation and graphic design services company.
Cyrstal Comm.	Cons	Saskatoon--Rosetown--Biggar (SK)	\$6,346	Small Saskatoon-based communications firm.
Feedback Research Corp.	Cons	Scarborough--Guildwood (ON)	\$6,000	Small opinion survey research firm.
Gillcomm Solutions Centres Ltd.	Cons	Wascana (SK)	\$15,335	Regina-based call centre.
Goyeau Communications	NDP	Toronto Centre (ON)	\$10,392	Toronto-based fundraising consultancy.
Highdefinition Communications	Libs	Charleswood--St. James--Assiniboia (MB)	\$6,320	No online information found.
Mary Mordue Consulting	Libs	Oxford (ON)	\$9,825	Small local communications consultancy.
Media Concept	Libs	Sudbury (ON)	\$5,854	No online information found.
Mediaco	Libs	Newmarket--Aurora (ON)	\$9,729	Provides "audio visual staging services" such as event lighting and webcasting at press conferences

(table continued on next page)



Table 3 (continued)

Supplier <sup>a</sup>	Party	Electoral District (province)	Amount (\$)	Comment
MediaGraphics	Cons	Burnaby--Douglas (BC)	\$10,762	No online information found.
ON Communications Inc.	Libs	Oxford (ON)	\$31,167	No online information found.
One Source Marketing	Lib	Desnethé--Mississippi--Churchill River (SK)	\$6,500	Supplies customizable advertising items.
Outcrop Communications			\$12,854	Marketing communications firm with branches in all three Canadian territories and offering service in Inuktitut.
Pat Bugera Communications Consulting	Libs	Western Arctic (NWT)		Small local communications consultancy.
Parmac Relationship Marketing Ltd.	Lib	Nanaimo--Alberni (BC)	\$10,756	Oshawa-based telemarketing firm.
Peregrine Consulting	Libs	Kelowna--Lake Country (BC)	\$6,473	No online information found.
Phoenix Advertising Group Inc.	Libs	Regina--Qu'Appelle (SK)	\$6,035	Regina-based advertising agency.
Prime Communications Inc.	Cons	Avalon (NL)	\$6,647	Communications consulting firm.
RB Marketing	NDP	Ottawa South (ON)	\$5,949	Appears to offer direct mail advertising services.
Rockford Marketing	Cons	Thornhill (ON)	\$6,566	No online information found.
Shawn Howard Communication	Cons	Calgary Northeast (AB)	\$10,727	An individual who supplied communications consulting.
Spotlight Strategies Inc.	Cons	Calgary Centre-North (AB)	\$16,321	Calgary-based communications consulting firm.
Taylor Advertising	Cons	Elgin--Middlesex--London (ON)	\$10,804	Small local communications consultancy.
TWG Communications	Cons	Nipissing--Timiskaming (ON)	\$58,712	Marketing communications agency.
Van Smith Marketing	Libs	Laval--Les Îles (QC)	\$8,798	Promotional products and design company.
William Huff Advertising Ltd.	Cons	Fort McMurray--Athabasca (AB)	\$9,721	Signage and printing company.
Zone Communications Inc.	Libs	Richmond (BC)	\$9,990	Translation and interpretation services.

<sup>a</sup>Suppliers with at least one \$5000 entry and at least one of the following keywords were considered for inclusion: advert, campaign, comm, consult, contact, market, media, public, research, strat, voice, voter.

Cross (2004: 114-115) has described political parties' expectations of their local units purchasing thousands of dollars worth of campaign materials. This centralization of communications tends to occur in winnable ridings and can include signage, direct mail leaflets, brochures, and telephone canvassing scripts. In the 2000 campaign, Montreal-based Touché Media Marketing was a declared supplier for 71 of 75 Bloc Québécois candidates, and also happened to be the central party's authorized agent for the purchase of broadcasting time.<sup>18</sup> By comparison, that year the Liberals' and Canadian Alliances' agents were named as a supplier for just one party candidate each, while all other parties' media purchasing agencies had no financially declared involvement with their candidates. So was there evidence of central coordination in 2006?

As shown in Table 4, in 2006 Touché Media Marketing was once again the Bloc's broadcasting purchase agent, however this time no candidates reported using that company's services. One Liberal candidate used the services of that party's agent and it was the NDP, with three candidates, that this time exhibited the most top-down coordination in this manner. By comparison the Conservative and Green parties had no such evident coordination. This provides an interesting contrast between the vertical ties in the NDP—which had such weak organizations in so many districts that it had less of a pan-Canadian presence than concentrated pockets of strength—*versus* the horizontal relationships among Conservative and Liberal candidates who were comparatively strong across Canada.

**Table 4**  
**Agents for the Purchase of Broadcasting Appearing in Candidate's Declarations, 2006**

Party	Broadcasting Agent <sup>a</sup>	# candidates	Province(s)	Mean \$
Liberal	ZenithOptimedia Inc.	1	NWT	\$1,605
Conservative	Retail Media Inc. (RMI)	0	—	—
Bloc Québécois	Touché! Média- Marketing inc.	0	—	—
New Democratic	NOW Communications	3	SK, NS, YK	\$3,170
Green	n/a (individuals)	—	—	—

<sup>a</sup>Source: The Broadcasting Arbitrator, 2005. "Broadcasting guidelines: Federal general election, January 23, 2006." [Online]. Toronto. Available [www.elections.ca/med/bro/guidelines2006.pdf](http://www.elections.ca/med/bro/guidelines2006.pdf). Accessed April 26, 2007.

Money was also exchanged between constituency campaigns belonging to the same political party. For instance, Conservatives in five Edmonton ridings each declared \$219.06 in miscellaneous expenses for the Conservative candidate in Edmonton Centre (where the party succeeded in defeating a Liberal minister). There are examples of similar behaviour for other parties, including an example of NDP horizontal integration among three London area campaigns which each gave \$70.54 to the NDP in Elgin--Middlesex--London for advertising.

#### **e) Other Declarations**

There was a wide variety of other supplier declarations. Money was given to community organizations such as neighbourhood associations, seniors' groups, charities and museums; to local services such as fire associations; to business associations such as chambers of commerce; and to religious groups and churches. Legal matters were addressed such as court costs and lawyers' fees, "losses from crime" were declared (presumably vandalized signs), and in one

<sup>18</sup> Only one of the 71 candidates declared giving Touché Media Marketing less than \$9,500. See Marland, "Political marketing communications."

instance signage was said to have been “misplaced.” Health aspects emerged, such as athletic medical supplies, purchases from drug stores, fitness centre fees, and customized seating for a quadriplegic candidate. Expenses involving Elections Ontario, for the House of Commons and for public libraries also appeared—as did the use of a pawnbroker in Saskatoon.

Some potentially interesting entries turned out to be mundane. The Conservatives’ use of “Lovers Warehouse” in London was not a sexual pleasure store but rather a furniture and warehouse equipment supplier. Advertising with “Orville Santa” in Thunder Bay was not some sort of Christmas promotion but actually the name of a former municipal councillor who provided communication services. Some curious entries, such as the Bloc Québécois declaring “Bell Élection 2005” in Sherbrooke, will go unknown without another data source. Liberal candidates in three Toronto-area electoral districts declared over \$8,000 each for non-broadcast advertising with a supplier named “Poison Apple Productions” that I was unable to pinpoint online. Furthermore the supplier “politicalvision.ca” was one of a number that no longer existed online in 2007.

Finally, signage purchases and direct mail using Canada Post were such regular listings that these merit examination elsewhere. This methodology can also open other avenues for further research. For instance, Treehouse Media Inc. was hired by four Conservative candidates in British Columbia, including one in Victoria. An organization by the same name paid nearly \$3,000 towards a third-party (named “Common Sense Advocacy of Victoria”) for an advertisement that appeared in the *Victoria Times Colonist* on January 21, 2006.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, there were many instances of suppliers which turned up on lists of contributors to a provincial political party. As well, the 2006 declarations indicate that large sums of money were often paid to the main party organization for advertising, salaries, and office expenses. This seems particularly notable with Bloc Québécois candidates.

## Conclusion

This paper provides nuggets of information that fills a gap in the literature about pan-Canadian electioneering in federal electoral districts. Studies of candidate spending can be supplemented by the methodology of using a keyword search and visual review of suppliers listed in candidates’ election returns. The preceding review demonstrated, for instance, that there is scant evidence of special winter electioneering tactics and can help dismiss any illusions that local campaigning is a glamorous business.

There are clearly a plethora of mundane but necessary components involved with putting off a local campaign. This includes opening bank accounts, changing office locks, coordinating furniture, ordering bottled water, shredding documents, sending flowers to funeral homes, making purchases at drug stores, and visiting public libraries. Any perceptions of extravagance, such as shopping for clothes or campaigners dining out together, is tempered by evidence of a weary lifestyle that requires eating fast food and considerable travel. As well, unanticipated situations emerge that range from getting an office computer repaired and replacing damaged signs to fixing a cracked windshield, hiring a plumber or even dealing with lost eyeglasses.

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<sup>19</sup> Elections Canada, “Common sense advocacy of Victoria,” [Third Party Advertising report online]; available from [www.elections.ca/pol/thi/tp39/tp-0076.pdf](http://www.elections.ca/pol/thi/tp39/tp-0076.pdf); Internet: accessed 18 Apr. 2007.

As campaigns do become professionalized there is a greater need for financial resources to offset a lack of unpaid human resources. People may expect payment for their time, whether this is babysitting or cleaning up the office, and sometimes workers are hired through staffing agencies. Some relatively sophisticated tools are purchased, mostly involving available commercial direct marketing tactics, and online conveniences also exist. This includes buying promotional tools or using electronic currency however advertising online still does not appear to be particularly popular at the district level. The plethora of communications options available certainly point to the value of having a media coordinator who can facilitate the strategy, design, production and buying associated with so many media purchases.

There is a need for scrutiny of the relationships between candidates and election campaign suppliers that extends beyond academic curiosity of electioneering behaviour. As long as spending is partly refunded from the public purse there exists an incentive to inflate declarations. This may occur in a coordinated manner (as with the Bloc Québécois in 2000) with specific organizations because there is no limit on the proportion of the limit that one particular supplier can receive. It is well known that the relationship between communications suppliers and politicians during an election can translate into post-election favouritism. Special attention might be paid to the election suppliers whom candidates or fellow candidates own or are employed by.

The tabulated data presented here are only a sample of the dozens of suppliers hired by constituency campaigns. But the search has provided enough insights to merit full-scale quantitative research using this technique for this or related topics (investigating the local ties with polling firms, perhaps). If so, Elections Canada would need to be convinced to make the entire expenditure dataset available in a single file available for download.

Further research might build on the evidence of party coordination in neighbouring districts and party linkages with candidate operations. The extent to which coordinated suppliers among local party units are also declared as suppliers by the party at the national level might be documented. Furthermore, post-campaign government contracts could be monitored, as could contributions to provincial parties and the occurrence of third-party associations as suppliers. This might lead to recommendations for further restrictions, such as limits on the number of campaigns a particular firm can work with, a post-election cooling off period for suppliers getting government work, and party candidates not being allowed to hire a business owned by one of their candidates.

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