

# Leadership, Partisan Loyalty, and Issue Salience: The 2011 Provincial Election in Saskatchewan

David McGrane<sup>i</sup>, Stephen White<sup>ii</sup>, Loleen Berdahl<sup>iii</sup>, and Michael Atkinson<sup>iv</sup>

<sup>i</sup> St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan - E-mail address: david.mcgrane@usask.ca

<sup>ii</sup> Concordia University - E-mail address: steve.white@concordia.ca

<sup>iii</sup> University of Saskatchewan - E-mail address: loleen.berdahl@usask.ca

<sup>iv</sup> Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy - E-mail address: michael.atkinson@usask.ca

**Abstract.** This article seeks to provide an understanding of the historic success of the Saskatchewan Party and the historic failure of the NDP in the 2011 Saskatchewan provincial election. Drawing on telephone survey data from the 2011 Saskatchewan Election Study, we argue that leadership, partisan loyalty, and issue salience best explain the Saskatchewan Party's dominance over the NDP. On election day, the Saskatchewan Party benefitted from the carefully cultivated popularity of Brad Wall, the development of a loyal base of voters who believed in the party's vision of a 'New Saskatchewan', and the confidence of the electorate with the party's handling of key issues. The NDP's loss of seats and the drop in its popular vote can be attributed to the unpopularity of the party's leader, its overreliance on a relatively small base of party loyalists, and its inability to connect with voters on issues that were of most importance to them.

**Keywords.** Saskatchewan, elections, Saskatchewan Party, New Democratic Party.

On November 7, 2011, the ground of Saskatchewan politics appeared to shift. Saskatchewan is "widely viewed as the cradle of Canadian social democracy" (Wesley, 2011: 1) and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and its successor, the New Democratic Party (NDP), had held power for just over 47 years between 1944 and 2010. With election victories more numerous than setbacks, the CCF-NDP always followed the occasional electoral defeat by bouncing back in the next election with spirited effort that came close to bringing down the incumbent government; indeed, the NDP's comebacks in the 1967 and 1986 elections signalled the 'beginning of the end' for Thatcher and Devine governments, respectively.

However, the 2011 provincial election did not follow this pattern. Instead of living up to its moniker as Saskatchewan's "natural governing party" (Wesley, 2011: 3), the NDP lost 5% of its popular vote and dropped 11 seats, including that of its leader. After four years in power, the centre-right Saskatchewan Party increased its popular vote from 51% to

**Résumé.** Cet article cherche à comprendre le succès historique du Parti saskatchewanais (PS) et l'échec historique du Nouveau Parti démocratique (NPD) lors de l'élection provinciale de la Saskatchewan de 2011. En utilisant les données de questionnaires téléphoniques effectués dans le cadre de l'Étude électorale de la Saskatchewan de 2011, nous avançons que le leadership, la loyauté partisane, et l'attention portée sur une question expliquent le mieux la domination du PS sur le NPD. Le jour de l'élection, le SP a bénéficié d'une popularité de Brad Wall cultivée avec soin, le développement d'une base loyale de votants qui ont adhéré à la vision du parti d'une « Nouvelle Saskatchewan », et la confiance de l'électorat dans la manière dont le parti abordait les questions clef. La perte de sièges pour le NPD et la baisse de son vote populaire peuvent être attribuées à l'impopularité du chef du parti, sa dépendance d'une base relativement faible de personnes loyales au parti, et son incapacité à établir un lien avec les votants sur des questions prioritaires pour eux.

**Mots clefs.** Saskatchewan, élections, Parti saskatchewanais, Nouveau Parti démocratique.

64%, an unprecedented level of electoral support in Saskatchewan politics. It captured every seat in the provincial legislature lost by the NDP. Saskatchewan has suddenly become a remarkably uncompetitive two party system dominated by a conservative, rather than social democratic, political party.

In this article, we explore a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to explain this apparent shift in Saskatchewan politics. We show how leadership evaluations, partisan loyalty, and issue salience led to the historic success of the Saskatchewan Party and the unprecedented failure of the NDP in the 2011 Saskatchewan provincial election. We begin with an analysis of the Saskatchewan Party's first term in office and of the election campaign, arguing that the party's investments in the brand of its popular leader, Brad Wall, and its image of a cautious, centrist government resonated with the electorate, while the NDP's selection of an unpopular leader (Dwain Lingenfelter) and its campaign promises to expand costly programs failed to attract a broad electoral

base. The analyses of previous Saskatchewan provincial elections have been generally qualitative in nature and have never involved a survey of voters to establish the basic dynamics of electoral behaviour.<sup>1</sup> For the first time, we are able to support a qualitative assessment of a Saskatchewan provincial election with a statistical analysis of vote choice to deepen our understanding of Saskatchewan politics. Drawing on original data from the 2011 Saskatchewan Election Study (SKES), we show that the Saskatchewan Party's victory was attributable primarily to the popularity of Brad Wall, which was reinforced by a strong base of party loyalists and the electorate's confidence in the party on the issues that it held to be important, such as maintaining economic growth and improving health care. We also show that the NDP's historic loss was attributable to the unpopularity of its leader and the low salience of its policy issues; indeed, the NDP ended up having to motivate its small base of party loyalists (roughly 20% of the electorate) just to maintain a foothold in the legislature.

### **Sowing the Seeds of Success and Failure: Saskatchewan Politics Prior to the Election**

Over the past decade, the primary debate in academic research concerning the Saskatchewan party system has focused on the extent to which the two major parties in the province have moved away from a left-right polarization towards a convergence at the ideological centre (Wishlow, 2001; Leeson, 2008; Blake, 2008; Rayner and Beaudry-Mellor, 2009). While there were some philosophical differences between the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP in the 2007 provincial election, analyses of the parties' platforms by McGrane (2008) and Leeson (2008) conclude that both parties generally hugged the political centre during the campaign.

Once in power, the Saskatchewan Party continued its efforts to portray its policies as moderate and balanced. After the Saskatchewan Party's 2003 electoral defeat, it strove to brand itself as a "party of the centre" (Blake, 2008: 168), and this message of moderation continued into its first governing mandate (Béland, 2011). The Wall government avoided controversial policy initiatives on social conservative issues such as abortion or gay rights;<sup>2</sup> was careful to privatize only the out-of-province assets of Crown Corporations and to use private health care providers only to reduce surgical waiting lists; steered clear of a potential controversy by backing away from plans to build a nuclear reactor in the province; and resisted pressures to invest public money in a new domed stadium in Regina. The government did not introduce major tax cuts for business, centered its tax reduction strategy on raising the personal income tax exemptions to remove low-income individuals from the province's tax rolls (McGrane, 2011), and invested in the province's child welfare system. This latter step embodied a 'compassionate conservatism' that seeks to provide better opportunities for the 'deserving poor' rather than an expansion of general entitlements. Finally, the Wall government succeeded in convincing the federal government to block BHP Billiton's attempted hostile

takeover of the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan – a move that clearly resonated with the Saskatchewan public. While the Saskatchewan Party government did not completely avoid ideological politics – as evidenced by its labour legislation and its decision to back away from greenhouse gas emission commitments made by the previous NDP government (Wood, 2009) – these moves were made early in its mandate, and the controversy they occasioned had dissipated before the election. Overall, the Saskatchewan Party ran a cautious, centrist, and fiscally responsible government during its first mandate.

It is also important to note the strength on the Saskatchewan economy during the 2007-11 period, even in the face of the 2008-9 global economic recession. The economy was a highly salient issue for Saskatchewan residents (Praxis Analytics, 2011) during this period, and the Saskatchewan Party positioned itself as having contributed to the province's economic success. Furthermore, the Saskatchewan Party entered the election with a record of sound governance: there were no serious allegations of corruption or dishonesty, and the Wall government used robust natural resource revenues to increase spending in a variety of areas while reducing government debt (McGrane, 2011: 99). While the government faced a budgetary crunch in 2010, due to significantly over-estimated potash revenues (Saskatchewan Department of Finance, 2010: 69), it limited spending increases and used money from its Growth and Financial Security Fund to avoid a deficit. Based on this combination of ideological centrism and strong economic growth, the Saskatchewan Party solidified its grip on power to the point that the party seemed almost invincible going into the 2011 election.

While the Saskatchewan Party cultivated future voters following its 2007 victory, the NDP struggled. Led by former Premier Lorne Calvert, the party caucus had a difficult time mounting a sustained attack against a government that was more centrist than most people expected (Mandryk, 2008). While the retirement of Calvert in October 2008 presented an opportunity for the party to redefine itself, the leadership race was dominated by traditional social democratic ideas such as expanded public ownership and new universal social programs. Dwain Lingenfelter, a well-known cabinet minister from the NDP's Romanow era (1991-2000), won the leadership despite damaging allegations of membership fraud. In spite of the political and private sector experience (in the Alberta oil patch) that he brought to the position, the NDP continued to struggle to present a consistent image and coherent vision to the Saskatchewan public. Initially, Lingenfelter's NDP took a right-of-centre tack, accusing the Saskatchewan Party of overspending, only to abandon this approach for a more left-wing agenda that emphasized greater resource royalties, rent control, and the public ownership of potash. Further, the NDP took an aggressively negative tone, with Lingenfelter attacking Premier Wall directly as the "little thief from Swift Current" and a "loser," while neglecting to make concerted attempts to appeal to supporters outside of its electoral base in Saskatchewan's inner cities. Although public opinion data are limited,<sup>3</sup> the available data confirm that the NDP's fortunes did not improve during Lingenfelter's time at the helm of the party

(Insightrix Research, 2009; Mandryk, 2009), and Lingenfelter himself proved to be a deeply unpopular leader (Insightrix Research, 2011; Cooper, 2011).

Due to the fixed election date, the timing of the election had been known for over four years. The short 28-day campaign officially began October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and ended November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, but prior to the start of the election campaign the Saskatchewan Party launched a two-pronged political marketing strategy. First, the party invested in the 'Wall Brand' through advertisements featuring the Premier speaking directly to Saskatchewan voters; these ads touted the province's economic success and population growth, appealing to voters' sense of pride and identity. Second, the party attacked the 'Lingenfelter Brand' with advertisements that emphasized Lingenfelter's negative tone and asserted that he "didn't come back from Alberta for you". With considerably fewer fiscal resources (in 2008-2011, the Saskatchewan Party out-fundraised the NDP by over two to one),<sup>4</sup> the NDP appeared unable to respond, thus allowing their opponents to define their leader.

### **Cultivating Victory with Potash: Campaign Dynamics**

While Saskatchewan's parties had been converging towards the centre in recent decades, the 2011 Saskatchewan provincial election provided a surprising clear ideological choice. The Saskatchewan Party touted its record of population and economic growth, promised to keep business and individual taxes at essentially the current level, and proposed an austere program of very small and targeted spending initiatives and tax credits totalling only \$413 million over four years (Saskatchewan Party, 2011a). For its part, the NDP claimed that it could finance a large number of new social programs and tax reductions totalling \$2.7 billion over four years without going into deficit by increasing taxes on natural resource (particularly potash) companies (NDP, 2011). The two parties also differed in tone: the Saskatchewan Party ran a more negative campaign, attacking Lingenfelter personally and warning that electing the NDP would endanger the province's economic boom and risk moving Saskatchewan 'backwards' into deficit (Fong, 2011). The NDP refrained from directly attacking Wall or the Saskatchewan Party, preferring to release advertisements emphasizing the "positive change" its policies would bring to families, and insisting that everyone should benefit from the province's economic boom (Mandryk, 2011a). As in previous Saskatchewan elections, business groups and unions did not stay on the sidelines: the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce reinforced the Saskatchewan Party's message through an advertising campaign that argued that the province was "on track", while unions sought to aid the NDP by running advertising attacking the Wall government and asking voters to "imagine" what could be done with higher resources royalties (Benjoe, 2011).

The basic narratives of the two parties began to be constructed during the first week of the campaign as both parties made numerous policy announcements. Premier Wall

opened his campaign by claiming that if the election was to be "a bidding war for the support of the votes of the people of this province, we're not participating" (Hutton, 2011a). He followed through on this commitment by making several low-cost promises aimed at seniors and families in suburban ridings that the party lost narrowly to the NDP in 2007. Wall contrasted this "affordable" plan with an NDP spending spree that would mean "going back to 1980s-style budget deficit" (Cowan, 2011). During his campaign kickoff Lingenfelter stressed that his party's campaign would be one of "ideas" aimed at "getting a bit more from our potash", improving health care, education, and increasing access to affordable housing (Hutton, 2011a). Of particular importance was the NDP's controversial proposal to negotiate a resource revenue sharing arrangement with Saskatchewan First Nations bands (Hutton, 2011b). The proposal generated debate throughout the campaign with fervent arguments made on both sides of the question (Green, 2011; Newman, 2011).

The second week of the campaign was again dominated by policy announcements as both parties released their platforms. Although the Saskatchewan Party was knocked slightly off message when one of its MLAs compared the NDP's proposed First Nations revenue sharing agreement to handouts that "can be often used for alcohol or drugs" (Chabun, 2011), the party recovered by the end of the week when Wall presented the party's platform at a large rally in Saskatoon. Structured around the slogan of "Moving Saskatchewan Forward", the 47-page platform highlighted the Saskatchewan Party's accomplishments during its first term in office and summarized the party's "affordable" promises targeted at families, seniors, and students (Saskatchewan Party, 2011a). For its part, the NDP continued its 'chicken in every pot' strategy during the second week of the campaign. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, Tommy Douglas Day, the NDP released its platform in Regina, promising \$2.3 billion in new spending over four years as well as \$500 million in tax credits and rebates, with plans to fund these expansions through increased potash royalties (NDP, 2011). The NDP's platform included a dental program for all school-aged children, 100 new primary health facilities, a \$216 million investment in affordable housing units, a tuition freeze, and a cap on childcare fees. At the end of the week, Lingenfelter pledged to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour convention that a NDP government would repeal the Wall government's changes to labour laws that "interferes with the right of people to organize and have a union" (Hall, 2011a).

The parties basically stayed on message during the third week of the campaign. Wall continued to hammer away at the NDP's "unaffordable" platform that "would plunge Saskatchewan back into massive deficits" while announcing no new spending promises (Saskatchewan Party, 2011b), while the NDP made a variety of new expensive commitments (Hall, 2011c; Warwick and French, 2011; Pacholik and Couture, 2011). The primary event of the week was a 55-minute "bland" televised leader's debate in which both leaders kept to their main messages and were not overly argumentative with each other (Hall and Couture, 2011). The general con-

sensus was that the debate lacked a clear winner (Mandryk, 2011b), a situation that has been found to generally benefit incumbent parties (Blais and Perrella, 2008). Following the debate, the Saskatchewan Party drew criticism from groups in the education sector when it announced its plan to delay the start of the school year until after the Labour Day weekend (Hutton, 2011c). Further, reacting to the profitable Potash Corp third quarter earnings report, Lingenfelter criticized the CEO's compensation package and called for higher potash royalties to pay for better social programs (Hutton and Warick, 2011), drawing rebuttals from both Premier Wall and the CEO of Potash Corp (Doyle, 2011). While both of these episodes generated discussion, they did not change the overall tenor of the campaign. Indeed, near the end of the third week, the first public poll of the campaign was released showing the Saskatchewan Party with a commanding lead of 66% among decided and leaning voters with the NDP at 30%, the Green Party at 3%, and the Liberals at 1% (Forum Research, 2011).

The final week of the campaign was uneventful. With few exceptions, the Saskatchewan Party avoided policy discussions, and instead the Premier campaigned in ridings seen as NDP strongholds (Saskatchewan Party, 2011b). Wall was attacked by labour leaders over a statement that seemed to support union members opting out of paying union dues (Wall later clarified that he meant that he would be open to unions collecting dues instead of their employers) (Hall, 2011b). Wall's earlier refusal to consider the NDP's idea of sharing resource revenues with Aboriginal bands induced a Chief of a prominent First Nation to call for the creation of an Aboriginal political party in the next provincial election (Warick, 2011a). For its part, the NDP made additional spending promises and unveiled an on-line calculator to illustrate how much the party's promises would save individual voters and benefit their families (Couture and Hall, 2011). In the final days of the campaign, the party brought popular federal NDP politician Olivia Chow to Saskatchewan to criticize Wall for caring more about protecting the profits of potash companies and the exorbitant salaries of their CEOs than improving the lives of average citizens (Warick, 2011b).

### Reaping the Rewards: A Historic Landslide for the Saskatchewan Party

The four public opinion polls<sup>5</sup> taken during the election period proved to be quite accurate: all four placed the Saskatchewan Party between 60% and 66% of the popular vote and while one Insightrix poll had the NDP as low as 26%, the other three polls correctly placed the party's support between 30% and 34%. Since the final result mirrored what public polling had been indicating since 2009, it seems unlikely that the election campaign moved large blocks of voters.

**Table 1: 2007 and 2011 Saskatchewan General Elections Results**

	2007			2011		
	Votes	% of Vote	Seats	Votes	% of Votes	Seats
Sask. Party	230,671	50.92	38	258,585	64.25	49
NDP	168,704	37.24	20	128,673	31.97	9
Greens	9,128	2.01	0	11,560	2.87	0
Liberals	42,585	9.40	0	2,237	0.56	0
Others	1,921	0.42	0	1,417	0.35	0

As O'Fee (2008) notes, Saskatchewan has generally featured a two party system and Saskatchewan politics has been increasingly drifting in this direction since the Progressive Conservatives merged with a group of dissent Liberal MLAs to form the Saskatchewan Party in 1997. The 2011 election results suggest the completion of Saskatchewan's movement back to a two party system. However, it is a two party system that is less competitive than in the past. While there are numerous examples of provincial parties in Canada receiving over 60% of the popular vote (Siaroff, 2009: 79), the Saskatchewan Party's 64% of the popular vote in the 2011 election was unprecedented in the history of Saskatchewan. The previous high was 57% by the Liberals in 1912. Further, the NDP's popular vote was lowest that the party had received since the 1938 election. As such, what is most striking about the 2011 election was the large 32% gap in popular vote between the NDP and the Saskatchewan Party. Since 1944, the gap between the first place and second place party in Saskatchewan's elections has averaged only 10%.

The large gap between Saskatchewan's two main parties seems to be attributable to two trends: the Saskatchewan Party's growing strength in urban areas and the reduction of vote-splitting among right-wing parties. As O'Fee argues, Saskatchewan's electorate has frequently been "divided on a rural/urban basis, with the two main opposing parties reflecting the social and political outlooks of urban and rural Saskatchewan" (2008: 195). The 2011 election saw a dramatic reduction of the rural/urban divide as the Saskatchewan Party supplemented their rural dominance with large majorities in many of Saskatchewan's urban seats. Even some of the NDP's strongholds in the central parts of Saskatoon and Regina fell to the Saskatchewan Party. At the same time as the Saskatchewan Party was making inroads into urban Saskatchewan, the Liberals' share of the popular vote steadily declined and they failed to win seats in both the 2003 and 2007 election. The results of the 2011 election signal either the death of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party or deep hibernation. The party managed to run only nine candidates and concentrated all of their limited resources on their leader's seat where he finished a distant third. The Saskatchewan CCF-NDP has traditionally benefitted from the vote splitting of parties to its right; the demise of the Liberals means that all of the right-of-centre voters have now coalesced behind the Saskatchewan Party.

## Leaders, Loyalties, and Salient Issues: Explaining Vote Choice

While issues and leadership appeared to be important factors in our qualitative assessment of the election campaign, their relative importance to the election outcome can be more fully appreciated by examining survey data. The 2011 Saskatchewan Election Study (SKES) was a post-election telephone survey of 1,099 Saskatchewan residents.<sup>6</sup> Our analysis of this survey focuses exclusively on the vote choice between the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP. Although the Green Party ran a full slate of candidates, and other parties contested the election in some ridings, the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP garnered a combined 96 percent of the popular vote. Thus, we rely on binary logit estimation to assess the unique impacts of numerous possible determinants of vote choice.

To what extent did issues affect vote choice in the 2011 Saskatchewan election? Two types of issues are discussed during campaigns (Stokes, 1963; Clarke et al., 2009): *positional* issues, which divide both parties and voters into groups that are for or against certain policy stances (for example, same-sex marriage, abortion, and free trade); and *valence* issues, which unite nearly all voters and parties behind a shared desire for the same outcome (for example, economic growth, reducing crime, and improving health care) (Stokes, 1963). Valence issues feature prominently in Canadian elections (Clarke et al., 2009), with parties presenting different proposals for how to reach the same desired outcome.

The key positional issue in the 2011 Saskatchewan election campaign was resource royalties, and the SKES data indicate that voters clearly favoured the Saskatchewan Party's position rather than the NDP's position.<sup>7</sup> The most prominent valence issue in the 2011 Saskatchewan election was the economy; as noted earlier, the Saskatchewan Party sought to capitalize on the province's strong economic performance during its first term – an appropriate strategy given that comparative research demonstrates that citizens are more likely to vote for governing parties when economic conditions are improving (Lewis-Beck, 1988; Anderson, 2010). The SKES demonstrates the public's overwhelmingly positive perception of the Saskatchewan economy,<sup>8</sup> again suggesting an advantage for the Saskatchewan Party.

But while the economy and resource royalties were prominent during the campaign, they were not necessarily meaningful in determining vote choice. The impact of issues on vote choice depends on at least two factors: the degree of personal salience voters attach to an issue and the ability of voters to link an issue to a party (Krosnick, 1990; Fournier et al., 2003). In order to gauge which kinds of issues were most salient, and which parties Saskatchewan voters favoured on those issues, the SKES asked respondents "what was the most important issue to you personally in the recent provincial election?" and "which party was closest to you on this issue?" The responses to these questions, reported in table 2, show that two valence issues, the economy and health care, were the most important in the minds of voters, and on both

issues, voters favoured the Saskatchewan Party. Further, a number of voters were concerned with two issues that were key to the Saskatchewan Party's message, namely deficits/debt and continuing to 'move' the province forward. Issues areas raised by the NDP, such as natural resources, education, and housing/rent control, were not very prominent in the minds of voters, and those who cared deeply about natural resources, the issue that the NDP stressed the most during the campaign, did not favour the party's position.

**Table 2. Most Important Election Issues for Voters\***

Issue Type	Most important issue (%)	Party Closest on the Issue (%)	
		Saskatchewan Party	NDP
Economy	18.3%	84.0%	11.5%
Health Care	16.2	46.6	27.6
Natural Resources	8.9	62.1	24.4
Debt/Deficit	8.1	87.9	3.4
Continuity/Staying the Course	5.4	87.2	2.6
Education	5.1	33.3	58.3
Housing/Rent Control	3.8	0.03	92.5
Labour Issues	2.8	5.0	80.0
Other	31.4	46.9	38.4

\*Does not include respondents who could not identify an issue

Voters' evaluations of party leaders can also be a crucial determinant of electoral choice, particularly in elections where valence issues dominate. Leaders are the focal points of most modern, media-driven election campaigns (Bean and Mughan, 1989; Mendelsohn, 1994). But the emphasis on leadership does not mean that election campaigns are mere popularity contests; evaluations of leader characteristics are important cognitive shortcuts that voters may employ to choose parties, particularly under conditions of uncertainty, or in the absence of other relevant information (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). In contexts where valence issues are prominent, leader characteristics are especially relevant, since voters are most concerned with the ability of leaders to deal effectively with those issues, rather than with the precise policy positions of the parties (Clarke et al., 2009).

Nowhere was the gap between the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP larger than when it came to leader evaluations. The SKES asked respondents to gauge how they felt about each leader on a 100-point scale, where zero meant that the respondent "really disliked" and 100 meant the respondent "really liked" the leader. Brad Wall received a mean score of 70 from voters, whereas Dwain Lingenfelter received a mean score of only 29. When compared to leader ratings in Canadian federal elections, the 41-point rating difference between Wall and Lingenfelter is striking. In 2004 and 2000, mean federal leader ratings outside Quebec differed by four and three points, respectively (Clarke et al., 2009; Blais et al., 2002). In 1997, the maximum difference was 10 points outside Quebec (Nevitte et al., 2000). Indeed, even those who voted for the NDP were not enamored with Lingenfelter. In fact, Wall's mean score of 45 from NDP voters in the SKES was slightly higher than Lingenfelter's mean score of 44 from those same voters. A full 58% of NDP voters rated

Lingenfelter between 0-50, which means these voters supported the party despite their reservations about its leader, and only 11% of NDP voters rated Lingenfelter over 75.

Issues and leaders are short-term factors that can vary considerably from election to election. Two other sets of factors, political identities (party and ideological identifications) and socio-demographic characteristics, are typically viewed as long-term determinants of vote choice, and should also be taken into consideration. The prominent role of party identification in structuring electoral choices is well-documented: those who identify with a party are considerably more likely to vote for that party (Campbell et al., 1960; Bélanger and Stephenson, 2010).

Despite the fact that the Saskatchewan Party is a young party that is made up of a coalition of former Liberals and Progressive Conservatives, Saskatchewan Party identification exploded in a relatively short period of time. In the 2003 election, 20% of the Saskatchewan electorate identified with the Saskatchewan Party.<sup>9</sup> By the 2011 election, SKES data reveals 41% identified with the party. During the same time period, NDP partisanship dropped from 30% to 20% while Liberal partisanship fell from 17% to 7%. Further, 2011 SKES data reveal that the intensity of the Saskatchewan Party's partisans is relatively similar to the intensity of NDP partisans and much higher than the intensity of the small number of Liberal partisans within the Saskatchewan electorate.<sup>10</sup>

Ideological self-identification has received less attention in Canada than elsewhere, as significant numbers of Canadians report that they do not use the labels "left" and "right" when they think about politics and find them confusing (Gidengil et al., 2012: 38-39). However, the impact of ideological self-identification in political systems outside Canada (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1989; Dalton, 2010) suggests that ideology merits consideration in an analysis of Saskatchewan provincial politics. The SKES finds that 38 percent of Saskatchewan respondents place themselves on the right of the political spectrum, 34 percent see themselves as centrists, 16 percent place themselves on the left, and 13 percent either did not know or refused to answer.<sup>11</sup> Similar to party identification, if ideological self-placement mattered in the 2011 election, there are good reasons to think it favoured the centre-right Saskatchewan Party.

Finally, although the extent to which social background characteristics affect electoral support in Canada has been a source of some debate, voters with similar social backgrounds may share electoral preferences because they often interact within the same social networks and share similar political interests (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Berelson et al., 1954). The Canadian evidence is rather modest when it comes to the impact of social background characteristics on vote choice in specific elections, but they do seem to account for longer-term trends in party support (Johnston et al., 1992). A variety of social background differences are taken into account in order to measure the effects of socio-demographic factors on vote choice in the 2011 Saskatchewan election; these include standard measures of socioeconomic status (employment status, income level, educational attainment), region of residence, religious background, age,

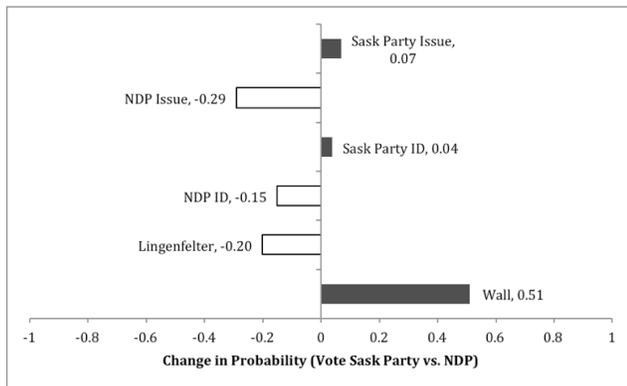
gender, union membership, and public versus private sector employment.<sup>12</sup>

To assess how these various factors – issues, leadership evaluations, partisan and ideological identities, and socio-demographic characteristics – influenced vote choice, we included them in our model (see appendix A for the logit estimates, and appendix B for variable coding). To ease interpretation, the binary logit estimates were converted to predicted probabilities: the impact of each variable is assessed by calculating the difference in the predicted probability of voting for the Saskatchewan Party when that variable is set at low and high values, holding all other variables in the model constant at their means. Most variables in the model are dichotomous, and for these we calculated the difference when each variable is set at zero and at one. However, two sets of variables are continuous: ratings of Brad Wall and Dwain Lingenfelter, and the measures for NDP and Saskatchewan party identification. To gauge the impact of leaders, we calculated the difference when the value for each leader rating variable is set at its own mean, and then at the mean for the other leader. We used the same technique to assess the impact of party identification. A positive number indicates that as the variable approaches its higher value, the probability of voting for the Saskatchewan Party increases, and a negative number indicates that as the variable approaches its higher value, the probability of voting for the NDP increases.

As it turns out, despite the welter of possible explanations the election outcome essentially boiled down to three factors: issues, party identification, and leader evaluations. As Figure 1 shows, our analysis finds that the overwhelmingly positive impression that most voters have of Brad Wall was clearly the most important factor in the Saskatchewan Party's re-election. Our analysis suggests that Wall's ratings advantage over Lingenfelter increased the probability of a Saskatchewan Party vote by 51 points, all other factors being equal. Evaluations of Dwain Lingenfelter also had substantial, albeit more modest, impact on the vote choice: our estimates indicate the NDP lost one in five votes to the Saskatchewan Party because of his relatively lower leadership ratings. Simply put, the large number of voters who liked Brad Wall gave a considerable boost to the Saskatchewan Party's electoral fortunes whereas the very small number of voters who liked Dwain Lingenfelter did little to improve the party's showing.

Vote choice in the 2011 Saskatchewan Election was also shaped by voters' assessments of which party was closest to them on the most important issue in the election. Voters who indicated the NDP was the party "closest" to them on their most important issue were an estimated 29 points more likely to vote NDP than were those who indicated neither the NDP nor the Saskatchewan Party were closest to them on an issue. A Saskatchewan Party issue preference mattered less to voters: those who indicated the Saskatchewan Party was closest to them on the most important issue were only seven points more likely to vote for the Saskatchewan Party than were voters who indicated neither of the two major parties were closest to them on an issue.

**Figure 1: Factors Affecting the Probability of Voting for the Saskatchewan Party (vs. NDP)\***



\*Changes in predicted probabilities derived from the logit estimates presented in appendix A using the *SPost* program (see Long and Freese, 2006).

Thus, the NDP's 'issue-based' campaign resonated with its voters while the Saskatchewan Party depended more on the personal popularity of Brad Wall. However, as many voters believed that the Saskatchewan Party, rather than the NDP, was closest to them when it came to important issues, the problem for the NDP was not the absence of issue voting, but the failure to convince enough voters that they were best able to handle the issues that were most important to them.

A similar dynamic emerges when it comes to the last significant determinant of the vote choice, party identification. Once again, it is important to keep in mind that whereas the Saskatchewan Party was able to count on a large contingent of intense partisans, strong NDP identifiers were relatively few and far between. The estimates show that the NDP lost about 15 points in support to the Saskatchewan Party because of this disadvantage in party identification. By way of contrast, Saskatchewan Party voting was only four points higher than it would have been if Saskatchewan Party identification was at the same level on average as that of NDP identification. In short, loyal NDP supporters were critical to the NDP vote, whereas Saskatchewan Party identification was less essential to the Saskatchewan Party vote. It appears that the NDP's campaign did a relatively good job of motivating its base, but that base was comparatively smaller than that of the Saskatchewan Party. Given their disadvantage, the NDP's challenge was to win the lion's share of votes among those who did not identify with their party (roughly one-quarter of the electorate) – something the party was unable to do.

It is interesting to note that left-right ideological self-placement did not emerge as significant predictor of vote choice. While voters who identified with the right and the center were more likely to vote for the Saskatchewan Party and those who identified themselves as being on the left were more likely to have voted for NDP,<sup>13</sup> when ideological self-placement is placed in the full model, its impact is washed away by more powerful predictors of vote choice namely leadership, issues, and partisan identification.

A number of other factors were taken into account in the model that did not emerge as statistically significant deter-

minants of vote choice. These merit further discussion because in some instances the apparent insignificance of a factor can be slightly deceptive. The estimation procedure used above allows us to discern the *direct* independent effects of each variable on vote choice, but it cannot capture their *indirect* effects – that is, those mediated by other variables that are temporally closer to the vote choice. Although a detailed analysis of these complex causal chains is beyond the scope of this paper, the relevant point is that even if these factors do not ultimately account for vote choices they can still play a role in shaping voters' decisions. For instance, even though voters' economic perceptions and their positions on issues surrounding resource royalties did not have any statistically significant direct effects on vote choice, there is some evidence to suggest that both economic perceptions and positions on resource royalties determined which party voters felt was closest to them on their most important issue. The economy and salient issues also affected evaluations of the party leaders. When voters' assessments of party leaders and which parties are closest to them on the issues are excluded from the model of vote choice, both economic perceptions and positions on resource royalty issues emerge as significant predictors of the vote. Having a positive evaluation of the economy increased the probability of voting for the Saskatchewan Party by 11 points while favouring higher resource royalties boosted the probability of voting NDP by 16 points.<sup>14</sup>

Socio-demographic differences in party support had a modest impact on the election outcome. Income differences are the only socio-demographic factor to emerge as a predictor of vote choice at a conventionally acceptable level of statistical significance (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ). Specifically, Saskatchewan Party support was five points higher among voters in the high-income category than among voters in the middle-income category. We are less certain ( $p < .10$ ) about the effects of three other factors: our estimates suggest Saskatchewan Party support was five points higher among women compared to men, seven points lower among residents of Regina compared to residents of rural Saskatchewan, and six points lower among voters aged 55 years and older compared to those between 35 and 54 years. Other socio-demographic factors had no discernible effects, reflecting an electorate that is not deeply divided along the lines of socio-demographic cleavages.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

The November 2011 provincial election presented the incumbent Saskatchewan Party with a golden opportunity to consolidate its hold on power in Saskatchewan. Entering the election the party had many things working in its favour: a buoyant economy, a popular leader, and a scandal-free, 'middle of the road' government. The party worked before the election to strengthen in the public's mind the link between economic success and Brad Wall's leadership, and the evidence suggests those efforts paid off. By the end of the election, the Saskatchewan Party had developed a strong base of 42% of the electorate that identified with party and

its message of continuing to move Saskatchewan 'forward' and its optimism about a 'New Saskatchewan.'<sup>16</sup>

The challenge facing the NDP was to distinguish itself from the Saskatchewan Party and shift voters' attention away from leadership considerations and on to other issues. The NDP attempted to do this with pledges to increase natural resource revenues, negotiate a natural resource revenue-sharing agreement with First Nations, build more affordable housing, and invest in a variety of other new social programs. Given the unpopularity of their leader and the strong economic growth in Saskatchewan over the previous four years, it was a reasonable strategy for the NDP to run a campaign based on issues where it felt it had an advantage. However, the issues on which the NDP enjoyed an advantage over the Saskatchewan Party were important only to the NDP's small base of partisan loyalists. A large majority of voters were dissatisfied with the NDP's leader and uninterested in the issues that the party decided to stress during the campaign. As a result, it was unable to attract the large number of unaligned voters or make inroads with Saskatchewan Party loyalists to make the election more competitive.

Heading towards the future, the Saskatchewan Party is exceptionally well-placed. It has a very popular leader, a strong base of loyal voters, support across all socio-demographic groups, and the general confidence of the electorate on the issues that it holds to be the most important. Nonetheless, no political party is invulnerable. The Saskatchewan Party is leader-centered and it is possible that Brad Wall could leave the party or that his reputation could be tarnished in some way. Much depends on him. Moreover, the party has tied its fortunes to the province's continued economic growth and Saskatchewan has a notoriously unstable boom and bust economy based on agriculture and natural resources. Finally, the party could experience internal strains: the centrism of the Wall government could strain the Saskatchewan Party's liberal-conservative coalition and a third party could arise; alternatively, the large electoral majority could embolden the party's right wing and lead to policies that alienate its more centrist voters. If the Saskatchewan Party is to have long-term success, it must find ways to renew its leadership while in power and maintain a 'big tent' party that represents a consensus-type politics focused on delivering optimal policy outcomes on valence issues.

The Saskatchewan NDP is in a difficult position. It has recently gone through a divisive leadership race where a moderate, Cam Broten, was elected leader by only 44 votes out of 8,284 total votes over Ryan Meili, who represented the party's left-wing. It has small number of MLAs with few resources to oppose the government in the Legislative Assembly or engage with the broader public. It is facing a very popular Premier, a well-financed Saskatchewan Party political machine, and a government whose centrism does not produce many controversies. Additionally, the NDP has lost the confidence of the public on the most salient issues in the province and has the appearance of a party that is adrift.

Despite the difficult situation in which it finds itself, the NDP has three distinct advantages in its rebuilding process. The first is that no other opposition party has a presence in

the legislature or an active extra-parliamentary organization. Despite receiving its lowest popular vote since 1938, the NDP still emerged from the election as the official opposition and the default 'government in waiting.' The second advantage is that the NDP still has a loyal base of roughly one-fifth of the electorate that has stayed with the party despite its difficulties. Third, being first elected in 2007, Broten has the advantage being only 35 years old but having over six years of experience in the Legislature and none of the baggage that comes with being part of former NDP governments. As a 'fresh face' for the NDP, Broten needs to re-build the image of the party and cultivate a new generation of leaders to restore the party's political marketing prowess and party organization. Further, the NDP must have a serious debate about developing new policy that will resonate outside of its traditional base of party loyalists and gain the confidence of the electorate on the issues it perceives to be most important.

As mentioned above, recent academic literature on Saskatchewan politics has been fascinated with the extent to which the province's partisan politics has converged around the political center. The 2011 election provides evidence that both supports and contradicts the assertion that left-right polarization is alive and well in Saskatchewan party politics. During the election campaign, the NDP ran on a substantially left-wing platform stressing taxing corporations to pay for expansive social programs while the Saskatchewan Party ran on the relatively right-wing idea of limiting government spending in the name of tax cuts and deficit reduction. Moreover, the Saskatchewan Election Study illustrates that NDP supporters were concerned with a wide range of social issues and Saskatchewan Party supporters were more narrowly focused on the economy, deficits, and health care.

On the other hand, the fact that the Saskatchewan Party was able to win 64% of the popular vote suggests that there has been a convergence of public opinion around its centre-right vision for the province. Indeed, the NDP's attempt to divide of the electorate along stark left-right lines by running on a platform that resembled 1970s-style traditional social democracy was unable to attract substantial number of voters outside of the party's base. The NDP's appeals to positional issues like rent control, resource revenue sharing with First Nations, and increasing natural resources royalties had little traction with non-aligned voters. The success of the Saskatchewan Party and its dominance on the valence issues that were important to voters give credence to Rayner and Beaudry-Mellor's argument that Saskatchewan politics has converged "around consumer behaviours whereby citizens engage in politics and political decision making on an election-by-election basis guided by their assessment of the political party best able to deliver the most desirable package of goods" (2009, 25). If this is the case, the 2011 election illustrates how adept the Saskatchewan Party has become at a politics centered on leaders who cultivate a strong partisan base and concentrate on the valence issues that are great importance large numbers of voters. If the NDP wants to make Saskatchewan's two party system more competitive, it must move beyond representing a small minority of voters dedicated to a more traditional form of social democracy.

Indeed, the NDP needs to compete fully with the Saskatchewan Party when it comes to strong leadership, top of mind issues, and expanding its base of party loyalists.

## References

- Anderson, Cameron D. 2010. "Economic Voting in Canada: Assessing the Effects of Subjective Perceptions and Electoral Context." In *Voting Behaviour in Canada*, eds. Cameron D. Anderson and Laura B. Stephenson. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Bean, Clive and Anthony Mughan. 1989. "Leadership Effects in Parliamentary Elections in Australia and Britain." *American Political Science Review* 83: 1165-79.
- Béland, Daniel. November 2011. "Politics and Policy in Brad Wall's Saskatchewan." *Policy Options* 32, no. 10: 34-37.
- Bélanger, Éric and Laura B. Stephenson. 2010. "Parties and Partisans: The Influence of Ideology and Brokerage on the Durability of Partisanship in Canada." In *Voting Behaviour in Canada*, eds. Cameron D. Anderson and Laura B. Stephenson. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Benjoe, Kerry. 2011. "Interest groups keen on election." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 19, A4.
- Berelson, Bernard, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago 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*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview.
- Blais, Andre and Andrea Perrella. 2008. "Systematic Effects of Televised Candidates' Debates." *International Journal of Press/Politics* 13: 451-464.
- Blake, Raymond. 2008. "The Saskatchewan Party and the Politics of Branding." In *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre*, eds. Howard Leeson. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley.
- Chabun, Will. 2011. "Sask. Party MLA apologizes for remark." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 22, A1.
- Clarke, Harold D., Allan Kornberg, and Thomas J. Scotto. 2009. *Making Political Choices: Canada and the United States*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cooper, Cam. 2011. "A 'perfect storm' destroyed the NDP." *Regina Leader-Post*. November 8, A6.
- Couture, Joe and Angela Hall. 2011. "Lingenfelter adds calculator feature." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. November 2, A4.
- Cowan, Pamela. 2011. "Sask. Party focuses campaign on bottom line." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 17, A5.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2010. "Ideology, Partisanship, and Democratic Development." In *Comparing Democracies 3: Elections and Voting in the 21st Century*, eds. Lawrence LeDuc, Ricahrd G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Doyle, Bill. 2011. "Tax, royalty rates boost growth." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 28. A12.
- Forum Research. 2011. "News Release: Saskatchewan Party heading towards strong majority", October 27.
- Fong, Petti. 2011. "Wall is seen winning re-election in Saskatchewan." *Toronto Star*. November 6. A10
- Fournier, P, A. Blais, R. Nadeau, E. Gidengil, and N. Nevitte. 2003. "Issue importance and performance voting." *Political Behavior* 25 (1): 51-67.
- Fuchs, Dieter and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 1989. "The Left-Right Schema." In *Continuities in Political Action*, eds. M. Kent Jennings and Jan can Deth. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Gidengil, Elisabeth, Neil Nevitte, André Blais, Joanna Everitt, and Patrick Fournier. 2012. *Dominance & Decline: Making Sense of Recent Canadian Elections*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Green, Joyce. 2011. "The politics of resource sharing." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 20. A7.
- Hall, Angela. 2011a. "NDP would tackle labour laws." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 22. A1.
- Hall, Angela. 2011b. "Wall urges voters not to sit on hands." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. November 1. A1.
- Hall, Angela. 2011c. "Lingenfelter promises help for low-income earners." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. 28 October. A4.
- Hall, Angela and Joe Couture. 2011. "Debate lacks winner: expert; Potash adds sparks to otherwise low-key discussion." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 26. A1.
- Hutton, David. 2011a. "Wall, Lingenfelter ready for Saskatchewan election; writ to drop Monday". *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 5. A1.
- Hutton, David. 2011b. "NDP pledges resource talks." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 13. A5.
- Hutton, David. 2011c. "Sask. Party would change school year; Labour Day move draws complaints." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 28. A3.
- Hutton, David and Jason Warick, 2011. "PotashCorp's Q3 windfall spurs political debate; Plenty at stake for voters", *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 28. A1.
- Insightrix Research. 2009. *The State of Saskatchewan*. Regina: Insightrix Research. November 9.
- Insightrix Research. 2011. *SaskParty Holds Steady*. Regina: Insightrix Research. October 27.
- 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.
- Krosnick, Jon. 1990. "Government Policy and Citizen Passion: A Case Study of Issue Publics in Contemporary America." *Political Behaviour* 12(1): 59-92.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. 1944. *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Leeson, Howard. 2008. "The 2007 Saskatchewan Election: Watershed or Way Station?" In *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre*, eds. Howard Leeson. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.
- Long, J. Scott and Jeremy Freese. 2006. *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata*, Second Edition. College Station, Texas: Stata Press.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael. 1988. *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lupia, Arthur and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mandryk, Murray. 2008. "A budget the NDP should really love." *Regina Leader-Post*. March 20. D3.
- Mandryk, Murray. 2009. "NDP running into a solid Wall." *Regina Leader-Post*. November 6. B6.

- Mandryk, Murray. 2011a. "NDP platform begins to resemble a wholesale shopping spree." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 21. A4.
- Mandryk, Murray. 2011b. "Precious time ticks away for NDP's Lingenfelter at debate." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 26. A4.
- McGrane, David. 2008. "The 2007 Provincial Election in Saskatchewan." *Canadian Political Science Review* 2, no. 1: 64-71.
- McGrane, David. 2011. "Balancing Conflicting Purposes: Saskatchewan Taxation Policy from 1991 to 2011." In *New Directions in Saskatchewan Public Policy*, ed. David McGrane. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center Press.
- Mendelsohn, Matthew. 1994. "The Media's Persuasive Effects: The Priming of Leadership in the 1988 General Election." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 27: 81-97.
- NDP. 2011. *A Plan for Saskatchewan's Future*.
- Newman, Dwight. 2011. "Revenue sharing policy proposal divisive, unwise." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 27. A13.
- Nevitte, Neil, Andre Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, and Richard Nadeau. 2000. *Unsteady State: The 1997 Canadian Federal Election*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- O'Fee, Kevin. 2008. "Saskatchewan's Political Party Systems and the Development of Third Party Politics" In *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre*, eds. Howard Leeson. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center.
- Pacholik, Barb and Joe Couture. 2011. "NDP promises infrastructure investment." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 31, A1.
- Praxis Analytics. 2011. *Voter Preference and Issues Research: Base Report*. Regina: Praxis Analytics.
- Rayner, Jeremy and Tina Beaudry-Mellor. 2009. "Hope and Fear Revisited: Did the Provincial Election of 2007 Mark the Transition to a Stable Two-Party System in Saskatchewan?" *Canadian Political Science Review* 3, no. 1: 17-33.
- Saskatchewan Department of Finance. 2010. *Public Accounts, 2009-2010, Volume 1*. Regina: Department of Finance.
- Saskatchewan Party. 2011a. *Moving Saskatchewan Forward*.
- Saskatchewan Party. 2011b. "News Release: Premier Wraps Up Week Three of Campaign in Saskatoon." October 29.
- Siaroff, Alan. 2009. "Research Note: Seat Imbalance in Provincial Elections Since 1900: A Quantitative Explanation." *Canadian Political Science Review* 3, no. 1: 77-92.
- Stokes, Donald E. 1963. "Spatial Models of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review* 57: 368-77.
- Warick, Jason. 2011a. "Chiefs to form political party; Revenue sharing a concern." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. November 4. A1.
- Warick, Jason. 2011b. "Chow roasts Wall, Doyle." *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. November 4. A4.
- Warick, Jason and Janet French. 2011. "NDP promises affordable housing; 2,500 units would be built in term" *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. October 29. A3.
- Wesley, Jared. 2011. *Code Politics: Campaigns and Cultures on the Canadian Prairies*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Wishlow, Kevin. 2001. "Rethinking the Polarization Thesis: The Formation and Growth of the Saskatchewan Party, 1997-2001." In *Saskatchewan Politics: Into the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Howard Leeson. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre.
- Wood, James. 2009. "Premier defends lower targets." *Regina Leader-Post*. April 24. A7.

#### Appendix A: Binary Logit Estimates of Saskatchewan Party Vote Choice (vs. NDP vote choice)

Variable	Coefficient	S.E.
NDP identification	-3.53 <sup>c</sup>	1.48
Sask Party identification	4.19 <sup>a</sup>	1.05
Lingenfelter evaluation	-4.09 <sup>c</sup>	1.79
Wall evaluation	7.02 <sup>a</sup>	1.44
Increase royalties	-0.68	0.53
Share royalties	0.07	0.18
Economy better (vs. same/better)	0.62	0.66
Finances worse (vs. same)	-0.52	0.69
Finances better (vs. same)	0.27	0.64
NDP issue	-1.86 <sup>b</sup>	0.62
Sask Party issue	1.95 <sup>a</sup>	0.54
Left placement (vs. centre)	-0.42	0.75
Right placement (vs. centre)	-0.89	0.57
Missing placement (vs. centre)	-0.27	0.71
University (vs. high school/college)	-0.74	0.58
Less than high school (vs. high school/college)	0.17	0.82
Age 18-34 (vs. 35-54)	1.10	0.85
Age 55 and over (vs. 35-54)	-1.14 <sup>d</sup>	0.66
Low income (vs. middle income)	-0.34	0.66
High income (vs. middle income)	1.42 <sup>c</sup>	0.63
Female	1.09 <sup>d</sup>	0.65
Saskatoon (vs. rural)	-0.36	0.74
Regina (vs. rural)	-1.28 <sup>d</sup>	0.72
Other cities (vs. rural)	-1.27	0.87
Catholic (vs. protestant)	0.40	0.53
No religion (vs. protestant)	0.48	0.70
Other religion (vs. protestant)	0.44	1.00
Employed	-0.04	0.63
Union	0.18	0.67
Public sector	-0.40	0.53
Constant	-2.30	1.19
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.81	
N	567	

- a.  $p < 0.001$   
 b.  $p < 0.01$   
 c.  $p < 0.05$   
 d.  $p < 0.10$

## Appendix B: Variable Construction

Variable	Question(s)	Coding
NDP identification	Thinking about provincial politics in Saskatchewan, do you usually think of yourself as a 'New Democrat', 'Liberal', 'Saskatchewan Party', 'Green Party', or 'None of These'?	Very close = 1 Somewhat close = .66 Not very close = .33 No identification = 0
Sask Party identification	Do you feel 'Very Close' to the [party in g1], 'Somewhat Close', or 'Not Very Close'?	
Lingenfelter evaluation	How do you feel about Dwain Lingenfelter?	Continuous variable, where: Really like = 1 Really dislike = 0
Wall evaluation	How do you feel about Brad Wall?	
Increase royalties	In your opinion, should natural resource royalties be 'Increased', 'Decreased', or 'Kept About the Same' as now?	Increased = 1 Decreased / same = 0
Share royalties	Aboriginal people should receive their own separate share of Saskatchewan's natural resource royalties.	Strongly agree = 1 Somewhat agree = .66 Somewhat disagree = .33 Strongly disagree = 0
Economy better	Over the past year, has the Saskatchewan economy 'Gotten Better', 'Gotten Worse', or 'Stayed About the Same'?	Better = 1 All others = 0
Finances worse	Financially, are you 'Better Off', 'Worse Off', or 'About the Same' as a year ago?	Worse = 1 All others = 0
Finances better		Better = 1 All others = 0
NDP issue	What was the most important issue to you personally in the recent provincial election?	NDP = 1 All others = 0
Sask Party issue	Which party was closest to you on this issue? Was it the Saskatchewan Party, the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Green Party, or some other party?	Sask Party = 1 All others = 0
Left placement	In politics, people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' means you are 'Very Left' and '10' means you are 'Very Right'?	0-4 = 1 All others = 0
Right placement		6-10 = 1 All others = 0
Missing placement		Don't know/refused = 1 All others = 0
Socio-demographic factors	All coded as (0-1) dummy variables	

## Endnotes

- 1 A survey for academic purposes was conducted during the final week of the 2003 Saskatchewan provincial election campaign. However, the survey did not concentrate on explaining the outcome of the election. Rather, it focused on how voters assign responsibility for policy outcomes between the federal and provincial levels of government in Canada. See Fred Cutler, "Whodunnit? Voters and Responsibility in Canadian Federalism", *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3: 627-654.
- 2 One exception to this was the government's attempt to allow marriage commissioners to opt out of marrying gays and lesbians, a proposal that was rejected by the courts.
- 3 Environics was the only firm to produce public polling on party support in Saskatchewan from November 2007 to November 2009. However, due to the sample size for Saskatchewan (n = 126), these polls only be used as broad indicators of party support.
- 4 From 2008-2011, the Saskatchewan Party raised \$12.3 million compared to the NDP's \$5.5 million. Approximately half of the Saskatchewan Party's donations came from business while the rest came from individuals. For the NDP, 8% of their donations came from business, 10% came from unions, and the remainder came from individuals. See Elections Saskatchewan, *Registered Political Party's Fiscal Period Return (E-521)*, 2008-2011.
- 5 Forum Research released two polls (one in late October and one the weekend before the election). Inshtrix and Praxis both released polls in late October.
- 6 The SKES was funded by the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, with additional support from LEAD Saskatoon, St. Thomas More College, and the University of Saskatchewan College of Arts and Science. The survey was administered by the University of Saskatchewan Social Sciences Research Laboratories' survey lab. Results of the survey, which generated a response rate of 23.6%, are generalizable to the Saskatchewan population (18 years of age and older) + 2.95% at the 95% confidence interval (19 times out of 20). Data are weighted according to age, gender, and region of residence.
- 7 When asked, "In your opinion, should natural resource royalties be increased, decreased, or kept about the same as now," the majority indicated royalties ought to be kept the same as now (56 percent). Further, when asked to rate their agreement with the statement "Aboriginal people should receive their own separate share of Saskatchewan's natural resource royalties," most respondents somewhat (22 percent) or strongly (52 percent) disagreed with the idea.
- 8 When asked, "over the past year, has the Saskatchewan economy gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same," the majority of respondents (57 percent) believed the economy had improved in 2011, and when asked "financially, are you better off, worse off, or about the same as a year ago?", most respondents believed their personal situation had either stayed the same (60 percent) or improved (26 percent).
- 9 Unfortunately, there were no academic surveys of the Saskatchewan provincial elections of 1999 and 2007 which the Saskatchewan Party contested. The survey data from the 2003 provincial election was gathered by Fred Cutler for an article on voters'

sense of federal and provincial responsibility in the area of health care. See Fred Culter. 2008. "Whodunnit? Canadian Voters, Intergovernmentalism, and Responsibility", *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3: 627-654

- <sup>10</sup> In the SKES data, when the intensity of partisan attachment in Saskatchewan was measured by the simple question of 'How strongly do you think of your as Saskatchewan Party/NDP/Liberal supporter', 65% of Saskatchewan Party partisans answered 'very close' or 'somewhat close.' The same number for NDP partisans was 75% and 50% for Liberal partisans.
- <sup>11</sup> A respondent who answered 0 to 4 to the question "In politics, people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from '0' to '10', where '0' means you are 'Very Left' and '10' means you are 'Very Right'?" is considered to place themselves on the 'left' whereas a respondent who answered 6 to 10 is considered to place themselves on the 'right.' A centrist answered 5 to this question.
- <sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the SKES did not contain enough First Nations and Métis respondents to permit reliable inferences about Aboriginal voting behaviour.
- <sup>13</sup> According to the SKES, 69 percent of voters who identified as being the left voted for the NDP while 61 percent of voters who identified as being centrist and 87 percent of voters who identified as right voted for the Saskatchewan Party. Note the responses of 'refused' and 'I don't know' (approximately 13% of all voters) have been removed from these percentages. For definitions of left, right, and center see footnote 11.
- <sup>14</sup> The detailed results are available upon request.
- <sup>15</sup> For descriptive statistics on the voting patterns of various socio-demographic groups see Michael Atkinson, Loleen Berdahl, David McGrane, and Stephen White. 2011. *Profile of party supporters in the 2011 Saskatchewan provincial election: A research brief*. Saskatoon: Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.
- <sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the concept of a 'New Saskatchewan' see David McGrane. 2012. "Introduction: Public Policy in the New Saskatchewan." In *New Directions in Saskatchewan Public Policy*, ed. David McGrane. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center Press and Simon Enoch. Spring/Fall 2011. "The 'New Saskatchewan' Neoliberal Renewal or Redux?", *Socialist Studies* 7, no. 1/2, 191-215.