NEXT LEFT
Country Case Studies

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FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

ONE-HUNDRED YEARS OF PROGRESSIVE INFLUENCE: SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN CANADA

By David McGrane and Clement Nocos

Published by:
FEPS - Foundation for European Progressive Studies and the Karl-Renner-Institut
Avenue des Arts, 46 – 1000 Brussels, Belgium
T: +32 2 234 69 00
Website: www.feps-europe.eu

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Design, layout and printing:
Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR

Logo and cover design:
Les Marquisettes (V. De Wolf)

This book was produced with the financial support of the European Parliament.

European Parliament

ISBN: 978-2-39076-032-0 9782390760320

Legal registration number: D/2025/15396./27

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A few words from the Editors

The Next Left Country Case Studies are now a well-established publication series in the FEPS and Karl Renner Institut Next Left Research Programme, which is entering its 17th year of existence. This extraordinary collection of books is designed to provide readers with answers to reoccurring questions, such as *how are the other (sister) parties doing? What are the best examples that could be shared from their respective practices? Does their current situation result from a long-term process or just an electoral blip?* These and many other questions are covered in the volumes, which are intentionally kept short and remain focused on social democratic parties and the specificities of the respective national contexts in which they operate. Although they are crafted with a mission to zoom in on respective parties, they also provide incredibly valuable material that can enable comparative studies – as an innovative assemblage that fills an obvious void within the world of think tanks and contemporary academic writings. As such, they are relevant contributions for political scientists interested in party systems and contemporary political thought, as well as those who wish to gain a more nuanced understanding of the connection between European processes and the specific national political contexts.

Consequently, the collection aims to show the pluralism within the progressive movement in terms of narratives and interpretations, mobilizational capabilities and anchoring within societal coalitions, organizational cultures and electoral struggles. And as such, it hopes

to build a better understanding within and beyond the European borders, reserving annually one volume for a study of a party from another continent. This time, it has been a real privilege to offer this spotlight to the New Democratic Party in Canada – which in the next pages is diligently depicted in an absolutely enthralling text drafted jointly by David McGrane (Associate Professor of Political Studies at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan) and Clement Nocos (Director of Policy and Engagement at the Broadbent Institute).

The story that the two authors tell is the chronicle of "One Hundred Years of Consistent Progressive Influence: Social Democracy in Canada", which is marked by its genesis moment, diverse periods closed between the brackets of electoral wins and losses, and analyses of the fresh wounds for social democrats in the most recent 2025 federal election. Canadian social democrats are at a critical juncture, especially after the era of Justin Trudeau's Liberals had come to an end and the new Liberal regime of Mark Carney has replaced it. During this period of crisis for Canada, with the increasingly erratic of the superpower it shares a border with, what will be the future of the NDP in the constellation of Canada's political horizon? Amid all that, reading about the incredible resilience that the NDP has shown in adopting effective strategies to profoundly influence the course of the political developments despite never being the first party at the polls, one cannot help but wonder whether it can continue to play its historic role as left-wing pivot holding the Parliamentary balance of power?And here one must underline that while diverse constellations have been the case in the past, the NDP always carefully chose whether cooperation with the Liberal Party or a strong opposition role would be a more effective way to ensure the implementation of progressive ideas. This is what made them such a key, consequential stakeholder. And what

makes the last chapter 'Coup, Crisis, Confidence and Collapse" such a cliff-hanger.

Following the diverse chapters of the publication, the readers will be able to discover for themselves the meanders of Canadian politics regarding regional disparities and diverse standings between provinces. This is a very instructive insight, as it points to a number of issues. First, though NDP is a party that is active on the federal level, its strengths within the Federal Parliament are not indicative of the power that the party is or may have in the past been holding in the specific regions. Second, while already looking at the map of Canada, one gets a sense of how vast the territory is and hence how many dissimilar political cultures are then moulded into the national level politics, that still does not fully reflect all the nuances, when it comes to ethnical and also linguistic disparities. Recognising that fact only permits to appreciate the power of perseverance that NDP must have shown to raise and be the force it has been within the Parliament in Ottawa. And finally, thirdly, while it may appear analytically expedient to either cluster Canada within the political sphere of the North America (speaking here more broadly and historically) or try to see similarities with other Commonwealth countries, McGrane and Nocos deliver a subtle, but a very compelling argument as per which such attempts should be seen as rather complacent shortcuts. Instead, they provide vast evidence, referring to programme, organisational traditions and parliamentary constellations, that there is a good basis to consider NDP as a progressive party that showcases a certain Canadian exceptionalism.

To that end, the brilliance of the book is that within a limited number of available pages, it dives in the political history of Canada and describes the sense of responsibility and constructive role that NDP continued playing. It refers to several of the most prominent leaders, from the ones who shaped the developments of the party's predecessor CCF

(Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation) and build the Ginger Group (as an alliance of labour and farmer parties) such as J.S. Woodworth, through icons such as Ed Broadbent and the breakthrough of Jack Layton, while seeing collapse under Audrey McLaughlin and Jagmeet Singh. While it focuses on the contribution they brought to modernising the party, revising the programme, and often meeting tough choices, it also shows how these developments related to what the other social democratic parties elsewhere in the world were experiencing. In that context, it is thoroughly shown how much distress the Third Way brought to the NDP and what type of pressures it put the party under, keeping in mind that the NDP has always been a party that stood for a distinctive social democratic agenda and upheld its' distance from the Liberal Party. Reading through these pages allows understanding why some agreements (such as on tax policy) were achievable, and why on other policy measures in regards to equality no compromises has been possible and NDP stood tall, upholding within the Canadian context (even if sadly, not always seen that clearly by outsiders) the recognition of being a progressive alternative to the Liberals.

All in all, the volume by McGrane and Nocos is instructive, insightful and inspiring in the message of encouragement that the consistency, competence and ideological coherence allow the parties in the multipartisan system to play a role even if they are not the first by the poll. That is quite an intriguing notion that may turn rather useful for others, struggling in today's complex circumstances, with much of the volatility across the political systems and with an understanding that a landslide may be a feature of the past. Furthermore, while the global context has been facing many turbulences recently, the knowledge of nuances is crucial for seeing a potential for the alliances that could jointly strive for the return of an order built on values of peace, justice, equality and respect for human rights. In that sense, a dive into

Canadian politics that this book provides is instrumental in showing that there is a true, serious and consequential progressive resilience to be found there with their proud internationalist, solidaristic, and social progress-oriented principles.

Brussels / Vienna, May 2025

Introduction

Canada has existed in the shadow of the United States—a federation of several British North American colonies that organized in 1867 in the aftermath of the US Civil War, interdependent markets based on the export of Canadian natural resources that sustain US industries, and an asymmetrical relationship of economic and global power. Yet, Canada has carved out a distinctive politics for itself that it is notably to the left of its southern neighbour. Even a cursory examination of Canadian politics reveals that its governments have traditionally adopted much more progressive policies than American governments in a variety of areas such as the welfare state, public ownership, state intervention in the economy, labour legislation, human rights, and environmental protection. Given its geographical proximity to the United States and the massive influence of American culture on Canadian culture, why have the main contours of Canadian politics been historically to the left of the United States? Our answer to this intriguing question can be summed up in two words: social democracy.

What makes the United States unique compared to most industrialized western countries is that it has never developed a full-fledged labour party or social democratic party that has welded significant political power and influence. (Lipset, 1996) In contrast, a social democratic party has been active in Canadian politics and has achieved success in provincial constituencies and a limited amount of electoral success federally over the last one hundred years. It is

the argument of this case study that the activity of Canada's social democratic party has been largely responsible for pushing Canadian politics significantly to the left of American politics.

We make this argument by exploring the history of Canada's social democratic party and then examining its present-day situation. For those unfamiliar with Canadian politics, Canada has a Single Member Plurality or first-past-the-post electoral system which generally produces majority governments (i.e., the governing party has a majority of seats in the legislature and has little incentive to seek the support of opposition parties to pass bills into law). However, there have been extended periods of times in Canadian history where its Single Member Plurality electoral system has produced situations of minority government (i.e., the governing party has only a minority of seats in the legislature). During time periods of minority government, the governing party is forced to rely on the support of one or more opposition parties in the Canadian legislature to pass bills into laws and to remain in power.

Canada's social democratic party was founded in 1932 and was first called the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Subsequently, it changed its name to the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. The result is that, in the parlance of Canadian political historians, it is often referred to at times by the somewhat long and awkward acronym of CCF-NDP. NDP is the common usage today, with the CCF somewhat forgotten among ordinary Canadian voters. For the purposes of this case study, CCF-NDP is sometimes used to provide a throughline of continuity that spans nearly a century of Canadian history. While there have been some regional parties that rose to gain large numbers of seats in the House of Commons and subsequently disappeared, the CCF-NDP has traditionally been in competition with two other parties in Canadian federal elections.

The centrist Liberal Party of Canada has been the electorally dominant party in Canadian federal politics throughout the 20th century and early 21st century and is generally considered to be one of the most successful political parties in western democracies. (Clarkson, 2005). Since the first Prime Ministership of Conservative John A. Macdonald, the Liberal Party has opportunistically straddled the political centre, campaigning on contemporary left-wing values while governing on the right-wing. The party's "Laurentian Elite" origins (Bricker & Ibbitson, 2013) negate its present-day alignment with social democratic Third Way parties in European countries with labour origins—having only been moderated by the social democratic influence of the New Democratic Party during periods of Liberal minority government. As European parties moved to the centre over recent decades, the Liberal Party of Canada has maintained the centre as a "Big Tent", enveloping elements of the centre-left and centre-right.

The present-day right-wing Conservative Party of Canada (known as the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada from 1942 to 2003) has usually been the second-place party in Canadian federal elections and formed the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, though it has been in power occasionally and there have been several Conservative Prime Ministers. The original Conservative Party that existed from the time of Prime Minister Macdonald in 1867 to the Second World War reflected a British Tory tradition until its transformation into the Progressive Conservative Party that took a more centrist approach that challenged Liberal dominance throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Under this competitive Big Tent, the PC Party became more competitive with the Liberals, though there was much consensus between the two parties throughout the latter half of the century. At the height of neoliberalism, the development of the right-wing populist Reform Party of Canada in 1987 created a split among the conservative

movement that lent itself to further Liberal dominance in the 1990s. This conservative split was resolved in the merger of the PCs and the renamed Reform Party briefly known as the Canadian Alliance in 2003, into the present-day Conservative Party of Canada, with the right-wing populists led by Stephen Harper overseeing the union. Today's Conservative Party still maintains threads of Tory traditions connected to its original founding by Prime Minister Macdonald but also bears the resemblance of other European right-wing populist parties today.

Finally, Canada is a federal country with a central government that is referred to as the "federal government" with its legislature in Ottawa, Canada's capital city, and the sub-national or regional governments that are referred to as "provincial governments," with their legislatures in provincial capital cities. There are ten provinces and three northern territories across Canada that vary greatly in geographical size and population and one province, Quebec, has a large, culturally distinct French-speaking population that has historically made up about one-quarter of Canada's population. Furthermore, 2 in 3 Canadians live within 100 kilometres of the Canada-US border, contributing to the influence of the US economy, politics and culture across this boundary.

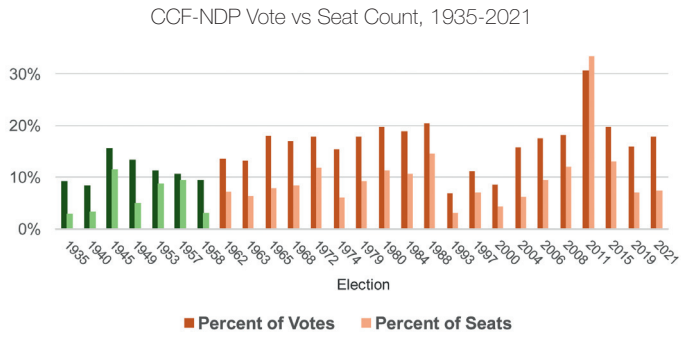
The sections that follow illustrate that, though the CCF-NDP has never formed government at the federal level and has never enjoyed a sustained period of country-wide electoral popularity, it has had what we call a "consistent progressive influence" on Canadian politics over the last one-hundred years resulting in the adoption of several left-wing public policy reforms that have significantly improved the lives of Canadian citizens. It has accomplished this "consistent progressive influence" through two separate avenues.

First, the CCF-NDP has rarely won more than 10 per cent of the seats in Canada's federal legislature (i.e., the Canadian House of Commons)

and has never had a member in Canada's appointed Senate.[1] The party has never formed a majority government or minority government at the federal level and has never been interested in joining coalition governments, meaning that there has never been a CCF-NDP Prime Minister or CCF-NDP federal cabinet minister in the history of Canada. Despite its limited electoral success and non-participation in federal Canadian cabinets, the CCF-NDP has strategically used its limited number of seats in the House of Commons to push Canada's national political discourse to the left and convince federal governments to adopt left-wing public policies. This has particularly been the case when the centrist Liberal Party of Canada has formed minority governments and has been forced to rely on support from the CCF-NDP in the House of Commons. For instance, the modern Canadian Pension Plan and the country's public Medicare system were introduced in the 1960s were forced on the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson by Tommy Douglas' NDP which held the balance of power. In these situations, the CCF-NDP has been able to negotiate left-wing public policy reforms in exchange for keeping the Liberals in power and keeping the right-wing Conservatives out of power. It is, notionally, much easier for a small social democratic party to push a centrist governing party to the left than to push a right-wing governing party to the left.

Second, the CCF-NDP has taken advantage of its pockets of strong regional support to frequently form Canadian provincial governments that have a wide array of jurisdictional powers in terms of taxation, social programs, and economic development. Indeed, Canada is

1 Senators in Canada are essentially appointed by the Prime Minister. And, since there has never been a CCF-NDP Prime Minister, there has never been a CCF-NDP Senator. It has, at times, been party policy to abolish the Senate due to its historical linkages to the UK's House of Lords, its members being unelected and, therefore, viewed as undemocratic, and its institutional rivalry with Canadian federalism.



one of the most decentralized federations in the world and Canadian provincial governments have more extensive powers than sub-national governments in many other federations (Watts, 2008, pp. 171-178). When it has controlled provincial governments, the CCF-NDP has used the considerable jurisdictional powers accorded to provincial governments in Canada to put in place ambitious left-wing policy reforms. While such policy reforms have only been put in place in one province and are not adopted nation-wide, the net result of CCF-NDP provincial governments implementing several left-wing policy reforms in several different provinces over many decades has been to push Canadian politics to the left over the last one-hundred years.

In many ways, the situation of Canadian social democracy is unique compared to other countries in the world. While the CCF-NDP has had a major influence on Canadian politics today and throughout the twentieth century, Canada has never had a very powerful social democratic party that has formed a national government like the British Labour Party, Australian Labor Party, French Socialist Party, or German Social Democratic Party. The electoral popularity of the CCF-NDP has been relatively weak at the federal level and unevenly distributed

across the country compared to the popularity of social democratic parties in many other western industrialized countries, concentrated in urban centres, throughout the last century. Nonetheless, the CCF-NDP has been able to be a consistent progressive influence by taking advantage of a combination of two features of Canadian politics that are not present in other western industrialized countries: the electoral dominance of a centrist liberal party and powerful sub-national governments. A quick survey of most western industrialized countries illustrates that centrist liberal parties have been electorally weak since the 1920s (e.g., the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom) and there are many countries that are either unitary states or federal states with weak sub-national governments.

The combination of these two distinctive features of Canadian politics has given the CCF-NDP the opportunity to translate its limited electoral popularity into an outsized influence on Canadian politics over the last one-hundred years. The CCF-NDP have taken advantage of the electoral dominance of a centrist liberal party and powerful sub-national governments to be a consistent progressive influence in Canadian politics, that is responsible for Canada resisting the pull towards conforming to the right-wing politics of the United States and establishing an international reputation for itself as a progressive and tolerant country. As today's Trump administration in the United States plays a role in emboldening right-wing politics in Canada, while the Liberal government of Mark Carney swings right-ward, today's NDP will need to continue to play an outsized role in pulling Canada left.

1

Precursors to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (1920 to 1931)

While there were some very small social democratic parties and socialist organizations in Canada prior to 1920, these groups were on the fringe of Canadian politics and had little real political influence (McKay, 2008). During the 1920s, a number of intellectuals, farmers' movements, and Christian groups (known as *social gospellers*) who were critical of wealth inequality within the capitalist economic system emerged in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. (Penner, 1992) In these provinces, several left-wing farmer parties and left-wing labour parties were formed and succeeded in getting their representatives elected to both provincial legislatures and the House of Commons in Ottawa. There were even some social democrats who became part of the three "farmer" provincial governments of the 1920s (United Farmers of Alberta, United Farmers of Manitoba, and United Farmers of Ontario) and exerted their progressive influence on these governments to push them toward left-wing policy reforms such as the co-operative marketing of grain. (Laycock, 1990)

In Ottawa, several Members of Parliament (MPs) from labour parties and farmer parties eventually came together to form the "Ginger Group" in 1923, which acted as an unofficial caucus of independent MPs who shared adhesion to socialism, social democracy, or left-leaning liberalism. (McNaught, 1959, pp. 209-214) J.S. Woodsworth eventually emerged as the leader of the Ginger Group and was able to gain considerable political influence in the House of Commons, despite a small caucus of MPs. The Liberal government at the time found was formed from a minority in the House of Commons, and therefore frequently needed to rely upon votes from the Ginger Group to maintain power and keep the right-wing Conservatives on the opposition benches.

In one of earliest instances of the "progressive influence" in Canadian federal politics that was to be an important part of differentiating Canada from the United States, Woodsworth was able to negotiate with the Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King to secure the passage of legislation leading to the creation of Canada's first publicly funded pensions in 1926. The Liberal Prime Minister went as far to offer a cabinet position, the Minister of Labour, to Woodsworth in exchange for a guarantee of his caucus' support until the next election, which would have effectively created a coalition government. (Ibid., 217) However, Woodsworth refused the offer, preferring to negotiate with the Liberals for his caucus' support to prop up their minority government on a case-by-case basis as bills came forward in the House of Commons. Using this strategy, Woodsworth and his Ginger Group continued to use their outsized influence to secure more generous unemployment insurance for Canadian workers, amidst the Great Depression.

Unknown to Woodsworth at the time, he established two CCF-NDP traditions concerning federal minority governments that continued until quite recently. First, despite occasional offers of Liberal Prime

Ministers to CCF-NDP federal leaders to join their cabinets, almost all CCF-NDP federal leaders steadfastly held to the tradition of the non-participation of their party in coalition governments (the exception, examined below, being Jack Layton in 2008). It should be noted that there has been only one coalition federal government in Canada's history (during the First World War) and coalition governments are quite rare at the provincial level as well. As such, there is not a strong tradition of coalition governments in Canada, despite many instances of one party not winning a majority of seats in an election. Nonetheless, CCF-NDP leaders have been important players in upholding Canada's general aversion to coalition governments, instead of being innovative and attempting to join with the other parties in a coalition government following a federal election. Second, Woodsworth's decision to not embark on what is called a "supply and confidence agreement" with Liberal minority governments during the 1920s has been replicated by all federal CCF-NDP leaders until 2022. In the case of a minority government, a supply and confidence agreement is used to guarantee support from an opposition party in votes with the governing party in the House of Commons for a specific period of time in exchange for a promise to pass certain pieces of legislation that the opposition party proposes.

2
The CCF in Federal Parliament and Provincial Legislatures (1932 to 1960)

In the 1930s, the Great Depression accelerated the development of social democracy in Canada as the immense injustices of laissez-faire capitalism became readily apparent in terms of the poverty and destitution of Canada's working class. In 1932, several small left-wing parties and other small socialist organizations put their differences aside and came together to form the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) as a "farmer-labour-socialist party." (Zakuta, 1964) Though the CCF saw itself as a labour party, it is important to note that trade unions were almost completely absent at the founding of the party, and most unions continued to cooperate with the Liberal Party due to a willingness to meet with labour's demands through the economic crisis. Labour unions otherwise maintained nonpartisan stances during the CCF's existence. The "On-to-Ottawa Trek" of 1935, during the Great Depression, was a moment of mass labour organizing from across Canada that demanded changes from the Conservative government of Prime Minister R. B. Bennet. The contested 1935 election, however, saw the election of Liberal Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King who promised US-style New Deal policies to

alleviate the economic effects of the Great Depression. Though the nascent CCF was able to capture a foothold in Parliament with seven seats in that election, it was not yet a force that could advance labour's interests.

The ideology of the CCF was outlined in the *Regina Manifesto*, which was adopted at the party's second convention in 1933. By today's standards, the manifesto employs what could be considered strident socialist language. The manifesto famously ends by promising that, "No C.C.F. Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Cooperative Commonwealth." (Young, 1969, 313) Preceding this bold statement, the manifesto makes wide-ranging policy proposals. Some of these proposals are still considered quite radical today: state planning of the economy; government boards to control exports; state regulation of all wages; and the nationalization of all banks, natural resources, and the distribution systems for milk and bread. On the other hand, the manifesto makes some suggestions that have gradually become accepted by all Canadian political parties, such as public health care, government-owned crop insurance, and human rights for racialized minorities.

While there was not an electorally successful social democratic party in the United States during this period, the CCF contested seven federal elections from 1935 to 1958, averaging 11 per cent of the popular vote and 16 seats per election. Its electoral high point was the 1945 federal election, when it received 16 per cent of the popular vote and 28 seats. The CCF's vote in federal elections was highly concentrated in a small number of regions. It obtained its highest popular votes and nearly all its House of Commons seats in the Western Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and

Manitoba. Its popular vote hovered just above 10 per cent in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, but that support translated into only eight House of Commons seats in that province over the party's two decades of established presence. In the four small provinces on Canada's Atlantic coast, and in Alberta, the party ran candidates but was simply not much of a factor in federal elections. The party was almost non-existent in Quebec, the second most populous province that contained most of Canada's French speakers. In fact, the party's name was not even able to be adequately translated in French due to the word "Commonwealth" and there was not even an official French name for the party.

The ability of the CCF to directly negotiate with the governing party in the House of Commons in exchange for left-wing policy reforms was hampered by a very long period of Liberal majority government that lasted for 22 years from 1935 to 1957.[2] During this period, the Liberals did not need CCF votes to maintain their majority in the House of Commons. Nonetheless, the electoral threat of the CCF on their left flank resulted in these Liberal majority governments adopting several left-wing policy reforms. (Young, 1969, Wiseman, 2020) The CCF successfully pushed the Liberals to put in place some of the most important foundations of Canada's modern welfare state such as a compulsory national unemployment insurance program, family allowances, widow's pensions, and the government subsidization of basic medical services. (Azoulay, 1997) They also pressured centrist Liberal governments

2 The Liberals won five federal elections in a row from 1935 to 1957. All of these election wins resulted in majority Liberal governments, with the exception of 1945 in which the Liberals nominally won a minority government. However, it was not really a minority government because, from 1945 to 1949, the Liberals governed with a working majority with the support of eight so-called "Independent Liberal" MPs from Quebec who did not run as official Liberals in 1945 because of their opposition to conscription during the Second World War.

to adopt legal frameworks that helped in the establishment of new unions, and to create publicly-owned corporations in the housing, airline, and banking sectors. Liberal Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent famously instructed voters to think about the similarities between the CCF and Liberal electoral programs by calling CCF-ers "Liberals in a hurry." (Wiseman, 2019, 137) Thus, without actually forming federal government, the activity of the CCF in the House of Commons and on the campaign trail allowed it to be a consistent progressive influence on federal Liberal majority governments throughout its existence.

In Canada, there is no requirement that political parties run candidates at both the federal and provincial levels and many parties have decided to be exclusively federal political parties or exclusively provincial political parties. At its inception in 1932, the CCF made the decision to run candidates in both federal and provincial elections. In practical terms, this meant that the CCF was one single institution that pooled resources to run campaigns in all federal elections and run campaigns in all provincial elections.

The CCF's unique foundation as a federal party with provincial wings proved to be a fateful one. As previously discussed, the CCF's electoral support was highly regionalized and can exist as a popular political party in some provinces, while having almost no electoral success in other provinces. The regional imbalance of the CCF's electoral support formed a major barrier to ever finding a federal electoral breakthrough, especially, since it lacked support in Quebec; a province that was home to roughly one-third of Canada's population during the CCF's existence. However, while the regionalized nature of the CCF's electoral support was advantageous on a provincial level. While there were virtually no social democratic members of American state legislatures by the mid-twentieth century, the CCF was able to routinely form the official opposition in legislatures of the two Western Canadian

provinces of British Columbia and Manitoba, though a coalition of conservative and liberal parties kept it from ever forming government in those provinces. The CCF even formed the Official Opposition twice in the legislature of Ontario (1943 to 1945 and 1948 to 1951), which is Canada's largest province. The presence of a strong CCF in these three provincial legislatures pushed political debate in these provinces to the left and ensured that the CCF was a consistent progressive influence on provincial politics in Canada during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

However, the CCF's greatest electoral success on the provincial level was undoubtedly in Saskatchewan; a medium-sized agricultural province in Western Canada. In the 1944 Saskatchewan provincial election, the CCF won a landslide victory and became the first social democratic government in the history of both Canada and the United States. (Lipset, 1950) The party was then able to maintain power in Saskatchewan with a string of majority governments that lasted twenty years until 1964. Using the wide array of jurisdictional powers given to Canadian provincial governments, the Saskatchewan CCF government was able to put into place an impressive set of left-wing policy reforms, touching nearly every aspect of the lives of its voters. (McGrane, 2014, 103-139) These reforms included the modernization of infrastructure in northern Indigenous communities and on small farms in the south of the province; government-owned marketing boards for wood, fish, and agricultural products; increased corporate taxes; and the most advanced labour legislation in North America that raised labour standards and made it easier to organize unions.

Additionally, the Saskatchewan CCF was very dedicated to public ownership and established several new publicly-owned corporations in the sectors of telephones, car insurance, inter-city bus travel, electricity, steel, and cement. The mid-century Saskatchewan CCF governments

also passed human rights legislation guaranteeing freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and protecting citizens from discrimination based on race, religion, or sex. This advanced progressive achievement was the first of its kind in Canada and was passed in 1947, a year before the creation of the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Finally, by the 1960s the Saskatchewan CCF established publicly-funded health care services, the first system of its kind in North America, which essentially decommodified health care in the province and provided comprehensive and free health care to all citizens, funded through tax revenues.

Most importantly, the influence of the long lasting CCF government in Saskatchewan extended outside of the province. (Wiseman, 2019, 144-145) Indeed, its labour legislation, human rights bill, and model for universal public health care were eventually emulated by other provincial governments and implemented across Canada by the federal government. As such, the sole CCF provincial government during the period from 1944 to 1964 was the catalyst for left-wing policy reforms throughout Canada. Outside of governing the country, this instance illustrates one of several later examples of how the CCF-NDP maintained consistent progressive influence on Canadian politics even if its electoral popularity was limited to only a few provinces.

3
The Early Years of the NDP (1961 to 1990)

That the CCF was not officially affiliated with large labour union centrals, as is the norm for social democratic parties in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and most Continental European countries, an effort began to bring the labour movement together with the social democratic electoral institution. The mid-1950s were a period of consolidation in the Canadian labour movement, with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) emerging as the umbrella organization for most Canadian unions. After the CCF's poor showing in the 1958 federal election that saw the Conservatives win for the first time in decades, and differences between the CLC's leadership and the previously collegial Liberal Party, there was a recognition that a more formal electoral alliance for the labour movement was needed. In 1958, the CCF was approached by the CLC to form a political party that would combine, "the CCF, the labour movement, farmer organizations, professional people and other liberally minded persons interested in basic social reform." (Knowles, 1961, 127) It was hoped that the new party would attract more unionized voters through its official affiliation with the labour movement, represent a fresh image as a party that was embracing post-war prosperity as opposed to being mired in Depression-era thinking, and become a fully bilingual party that

represented the aspirations of the Quebecois. (Bickerton, Gagnon, and Smith 1999, 102-105) After extensive debate and consultation, the new party was finally created in 1961 and given the name "New Democratic Party (NDP)" in English, and "Nouveau Parti Démocratique (NPD)" in French.

While it is difficult to summarize all the nuances of the NDP's ideology in its initial years of existence, it is safe to say that the NDP struck a more moderate ideological tone than the CCF, following the ideological movements of contemporary social democratic parties elsewhere. Instead of condemning the evils of the existing economic system and aiming to eradicate capitalism, the NDP stated at its founding that its purpose was to, "achieve a fully free and just society in which all citizens participate, and all share equitably in its fruits." (Knowles 1961, 7) The NDP's ideology can best be summarized as embodying four elements designed to achieve this purpose. First, there was an emphasis on full employment achieved through direct subsidies to the private sector and Keynesian countercyclical spending on public goods such as infrastructure, hospitals, and schools. (Evans 2012, 57) Second, like the CCF, public ownership was an important part of the NDP's ideology, but its scope was constrained to selected industries, such as railways and the distribution of gasoline. (Laycock 2015, 114) Third, the party favoured creating greater economic equality through the large-scale expansion of the welfare state financed by higher taxes on corporations and high-income earners. (Whitehorn, 1992) Fourth, the NDP came to embrace improvements to Canada's human rights regime to reduce the discrimination faced by women, Indigenous peoples, gays and lesbians, the disabled, and visible minorities, as well as promoting the need for environmental protection. (Wiseman and Isitt 2007, 583-585) As such, the NDP's ideology during this period was consistent with Moschonas's (2002, 15) classical formulation of post-

Second World War social democracy as "political liberalism + mixed economy + welfare state + Keynesian economic policy + commitment to equality."

Overall, the NDP was more electorally successful than the CCF in federal elections and this success stood in stark contrast to the United States where there was no electorally viable social democratic party at either the state or federal level in the second half of the twentieth century. Apart from a tough 1974 federal election (when it received 15.6 per cent of the vote), the NDP's popular vote remained remarkably steady at 17 to 20 per cent from 1965 to 1988. This level of support produced anywhere from 21 to 43 seats in the House of Commons (again, in 1974 the NDP won only 16 seats). However, like the CCF, the NDP's support in federal elections was very regionally concentrated. The party's electoral strength remained in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, where over two-thirds of NDP MPs were elected during this period. Much to the dismay of party activists, the name change from the CCF to the NDP produced only a marginal improvement in the party's electoral fortunes in Ontario, and the party continued to be irrelevant during federal elections in Quebec, Alberta, and the four provinces on the Atlantic coast. While the name had changed, the regional disparities stayed the same – persistent issues that have echoed for the NDP and other political parties as will be discussed further on.

Yet, like the CCF before it, the NDP was able to leverage the limited number of seats that it won in federal elections into considerable influence on the Liberal governments, particularly when these Liberal governments were in minority situations and needed NDP votes in the House of Commons to stay in power. For instance, federal NDP Leader, and former Saskatchewan Premier, Tommy Douglas was able to pressure Liberal federal governments in the 1960s, especially during

the time that the Liberals had a minority government from 1963 to 1968, to make several impressive additions to Canada's postwar welfare state. (Penner, 1992, 99-108) Expansions to Canada's social policy system include the creation of universal and free health care program across the country, a public pension plan that was mandatory for all employees, the Canada Assistance Plan that provided income support to low-income Canadians, and a guaranteed income supplement for seniors (often women) who were ineligible for public pensions because they had never been in the workforce, or only had been in the workforce for a limited amount of time.

Similarly, during the Liberal minority federal government from 1972-1974, the NDP, under the leadership of David Lewis, was able to negotiate with the Liberals on a case-by-case basis to achieve several legislative accomplishments that were very impactful on Canadians' lives. (Morton, 1986, 145-152) At the urging of the NDP amid the 1970s global energy crisis, the federal Liberal government tripled family allowances, made unemployment insurance more generous, created a Food Price Review Board to reduce grocery prices, established an oil company owned by the federal government, introduced regulations that reduced foreign ownership of Canadian companies, and implemented reforms to limit the influence of political donations by the wealthy during Canadian federal elections. (Avakumovic, 1978, 56-69)

Ed Broadbent succeeded David Lewis as federal NDP leader in 1975 and held the position for almost 15 years until he retired in 1989. Unlike the previous federal CCF-NDP leaders, Broadbent did not have the fortune of facing a minority Liberal government in the House of Commons. Besides a very short-lived Progressive Conservative minority government in 1979, Broadbent's time as federal NDP leader coincided with Liberal and Conservative majority governments, during the period of neoliberalism's upswing towards global ascendancy.

Given this situation, the federal NDP adopted that strategy of raising Broadbent's national profile and working hard to establish itself as the only other alternative political party in Canada, outside of the Liberals and the Conservatives. (Whitehorn, 1992, 187-210) While the federal NDP was not given the chance to directly influence bills being passed in the House of Commons during Broadbent's time as leader, the party was very prominent in the debates surrounding major political issues of the time period such as constitutional reform, privatization of publicly-owned corporations, cuts to social programs in the name of deficit reduction, tax cuts for the wealthiest Canadians, and free trade with the United States. On each of these issues, Broadbent and the federal NDP were a consistent progressive influence on Canadian political discourse, pushing back against the Liberals' adoption of right-wing policies in the second half of the 1970s and providing a social democratic alternative to the rise of neoliberal Reaganism and Thatcherism in Canada during the 1980s.

While the NDP was never close to forming a federal government in the first three decades of existence, it did have considerable electoral success in the provinces of Western Canada where it formed provincial governments for long periods of time in British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan (Heaps, 1991). This trio of NDP provincial governments put in place several additions to their province's welfare states such as publicly funded dental services for children, government-owned insurance schemes to offset the cost of prescription drugs, home care programs to aid the elderly, and government-built housing for low-income earners. (Wiseman, 2019, 144-147) Following the example of the CCF in Saskatchewan, the NDP provincial governments in both British Columbia and Manitoba created publicly-owned auto insurance, reformed labour legislation, raised taxes on the wealthy, and established human rights codes that prevented discrimination of

members of marginalized communities. (Penner, 1992, 112-136) There was even movement towards the public ownership of natural resources by NDP provincial governments through the creation of publicly-owned corporations designed to extract and exploit hydro electricity, oil, uranium, potash, lumber, and natural gas. (Morton, 1986, 147-161) Again, the NDP, like the CCF, used the considerable powers accorded to provincial governments to be a consistent progressive influence on Canadian politics, despite its constraints and challenges at the national level. Through provincial administrations, the NDP effectively championed important social democratic policies and principles such as the extension of public ownership, respect for human rights, the expansion of the welfare state, and labour legislation that improved the rights of workers.

While NDP provincial governments pursued their social democratic policy agendas in the latter twentieth century, a transformation was also taking place in the provincial politics of Quebec that was a separate thread from contemporary Anglo-social democrats due to the province's unique cultural context. Until the 1960s, Quebec provincial governments had been deeply conservative in both their economic and social policies and heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. The 1960s saw what is generally referred to as the "Quiet Revolution" in Quebec that asserted an aggressive Quebecois nationalism, alongside a movement to secularism away from the Catholic Church, that claimed that Quebecers need to overcome domination by English business interests and the Canadian federal government, to become "Maîtres chez nous" or "Masters of our own house." By the 1960s, the NDP had simply stopped running candidates in Quebec provincial elections due to the party's profound unpopularity in the province. En lieu of the NDP, the Parti Quebecois (PQ) grew to become an alternative left-wing political party that rose in popularity in Quebec provincial

politics. The PQ's mixed social democratic ideology (it previously cited Swedish social democracy as the example that it wanted to follow) with a separatist goal that sought to create Quebec as its own country, breaking away from Canada. The PQ eventually formed the Quebec provincial government from 1976 to 1985. While it did not convince most Quebecers to secede from Canada in a referendum in 1980, it did use the extensive powers given to provincial governments under the Canadian constitution to introduce several social democratic policie,s similar to those adopted by other NDP provincial governments in Western Canada. (McGrane, 2014, 103-139) Such reforms included the nationalization of asbestos (at the time, a critical natural resource industry), publicly-owned car insurance, heavier taxation on the wealthiest Quebecers, revisions to the labour code that raised labour standards, and a public dental health program for children. As such, social democracy had come to Quebec provincial politics, though the CCF-NDP was not its vehicles, and its values were heavily intertwined with the movement for Quebec sovereignty.

4
The Ups and Downs of the 1990s (1990-2002)

The 1990s were a tumultuous decade for social democracy around the world, and the NDP across Canada found itself amid the global wave of neoliberal domination over left-wing political parties. At the start of the decade, with the end of the Cold War, dynamics changed in federal Canadian politics with the rise in popularity of two regionally-based federal political parties: the Reform Party (which developed into the Canadian Alliance by 2000) in Western Canada, and the Bloc Québécois in Quebec. The decade also saw the near extinction of the Progressive Conservative Party, reduced to just 2 seats from 154 seats prior to the 1993 federal election due to conservative vote splitting between the new Reform party and the traditional PCs under Canada's First Past the Post electoral system. The Liberals took advantage of this fracturing of the Canadian party system to secure three consecutive majority governments throughout the decade. The federal NDP, like the Conservatives, could not adjust well under these changing dynamics and circumstances. (McLeod, 1994) Given its past electoral scores, the party was psychologically unprepared for the electoral disaster that it endured in the 1993 federal election, when its popular vote plummeted to 7 per cent that won 9 seats. After bouncing back slightly in 1997, the NDP registered another disappointing result in the 2000

federal election, when it fell back to 9 per cent of the popular vote and secured only 13 seats. By the end of the 1990s, the federal NDP appeared to be drifting towards irrelevance in Canadian federal politics as a largely forgotten fifth place party in the House of Commons, with little of the influence on the broader Canadian political discourse that it previously wielded, and little input on the policies adopted by majority Liberal governments.

However, the electoral fortunes of the NDP and other social democrats at the provincial level in Canada were much brighter during the 1990s. The NDP won provincial elections in Saskatchewan and British Columbia to form majority governments in those provinces throughout the 1990s. Furthermore, the PQ won back-to-back majority governments in Quebec provincial elections in 1994 and 1998, even if it was unable to convince Quebecers to secede from Canada in a second referendum on the issue in 1995. Most importantly, the NDP won a majority government in Ontario in 1990. The NDP's surprising victory in Ontario marked the first time in the history of the CCF-NDP that the party had formed the provincial government of Canada's largest and most populous province. Though, it should be noted that the NDP government in Ontario was short-lived and only lasted until 1995.

The NDP and PQ governments of the 1990s in Canada, however, could be characterized as "Third Way" social democratic governments in the mold of Tony Blair's Labour Party in the United Kingdom or Gerhard Schröder's SPD in Germany. (McGrane, 2014, Carroll and Ratner, 2005) Third Way governments broke for social democratic traditions and touted right-wing policy prescriptions in various ways: deregulation of several sectors of the economy; welcoming foreign direct investment; commercializing university research; and reducing the universality of the welfare state by targeting the entitlements of social programs. However, despite the global "Third Way" trends

that indeed influenced social democratic provincial governments throughout the 1990s, Canadian social democrats still maintained consistent progressive influence on Canadian politics through the extensive use of jurisdictional powers given to Canadian provinces. Their constitutionally entrenched responsibilities enabled progressive administrations to push back against some of the more deleteriously neoliberal, right-wing trends that were dominating other provincial and federal politics throughout the decade.

Instead of austerity and cuts to social programs, these provincial governments put in place modest annual increases to spending on social programs and introduced some new social programs in the areas of health care, education, and social assistance. Most notably, the PQ government in Quebec introduced a public childcare program for children aged 0 to 4 years old that cost parents only $5 CAD a day, at the time. These centre-left governments also eschewed the privatization of publicly owned corporations, while it was being programmatically pursued by many liberal and conservative governments in other provinces and federally. Social democrats in Canada instead preferred to take steps to increase the efficiency of public-owned corporations and expand their operations into new markets into other provinces and other countries, to stem criticisms of rising costs and low productivity.

Instead of passing changes to labour codes that favoured business interests, as was done by many right-wing provincial governments during the apogee of neoliberalism in Canada, these Third Way provincial governments consulted with both businesses and unions to find ways to make small changes to labour legislation that improved workers' rights, including pay equity provisions that raised the salaries of women and racialized minorities. Finally, social democratic administrations did not follow the ill-conceived and ineffectual attempts by right-wing provincial governments to generate economic growth through reducing

environmental protection. Rather, they pioneered the first steps taken in Canada to combat climate change, negotiating agreements with large businesses to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, instructing their publicly owned electricity utilities to construct wind and solar power, and mandating that gasoline contain a minimum percentage of ethanol. Politics in Canada certainly turned to the right along with the other Western countries at the end of the Cold War, but that turn would have been much sharper and more excessive were it not for the progressive provincial governments that held the line.

5
Building the "Orange Wave" (2003-2011)

Following its near-death experience of the 1990s, the federal NDP experienced an electoral resurgence that began with the election of Jack Layton as the party's leader in 2003. The beginning of Layton's leadership coincided with three successive minority federal governments from 2004 to 2011. Over the course of the federal elections that produced these governments, the federal NDP was able to incrementally improve its popular vote from 9 per cent to 18 per cent, and increase its seat count from 13 to 37, thereby increasing the power that it wielded in the House of Commons and improving the consistency of its progressive influence on federal Canadian politics once again.

During the minority Liberal federal government that lasted from 2004-2006, the federal NDP negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the Liberals to achieve several left-wing policy reforms. (McGrane, 2019, 89-122) For instance, in the aftermath of the 2005 federal budget, the NDP was able to negotiate several left-wing policy reforms in a package that the party labelled the "NDP's Better Balanced Budget." Within the framing of a balanced federal budget, thanks to the influence of global neoliberal trends, these reforms included subsidies for affordable housing construction (including housing in Indigenous

communities); a reduction in university tuition and better skills training for unemployed workers; a program to create environmentally friendly infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; more spending on international development initiatives to bring Canada up to spending 0.7 per cent of its GDP on foreign aid; protection for the pensions of workers in the case of their companies going bankrupt; and a reversal of a proposed cut to the income tax rate of large corporations. Similarly, with several members of the Liberal caucus voting against a bill to legalize same-sex marriage, the federal NDP lent its support to the Liberal minority government to ensure that the bill passed and Canada subsequently became the first country in the Americas to fully legalize same-sex marriage, and the fourth country in the world to do so.

While right-wing politicians in Canadian federal politics had split into competing parties during the 1990s (much to the advantage of the Liberals), they recognized the disadvantages that this created for their wider social movements and reunited under a single party in the early 2000s under the "Conservative Party of Canada." The renewed party subsequently won two minority governments that lasted from 2006 to 2011. Unlike the centrist Liberals who were willing to negotiate with the federal NDP for its support in the House of Commons when they were in a minority government situation, the Conservatives' right-wing ideology outright disagreed with the left-wing policy reforms put forth by the NDP. Instead, the Conservatives were able to govern in a minority government situation for five years largely due to the support of the Liberals in the House of Commons. Throughout the 2000s, the once powerful Liberal Party of Canada struggled in opposition under two quite unpopular leaders.

However, the Conservatives' unwillingness to seek out the support of the federal NDP in House of Commons voters did not mean that the party's influence had waned. Together with other opposition parties,

the federal NDP was able to block many of the more draconian right-wing policies that the Conservatives attempted to pursue, under the minority Parliaments. The best example of the NDP's influence was its collaboration with other opposition to reverse a package of particularly right-wing measures proposed by the Conservative minority government in 2008 that included suspending the right of federal public servants to strike until 2011, suspending the right of women federal employees to seek legal remedy on pay equity issues, a program of privatization of publicly owned assets, and reforms to electoral legislation that could increase the influence of wealthy donors on political parties. NDP leader Jack Layton even went as far as to reverse the federal NDP's long standing refusal to participate in federal coalition governments when he agreed to a Liberal-NDP coalition government to replace the Conservative minority government. (Topp, 2010) While the coalition never came to fruition because the Liberals eventually pulled out, the threat of a coalition that would have taken them out of power did force the Conservative minority government to drop these excessively right-wing measures in its next federal budget. Again, despite not being the governing party, the federal NDP was able to exert a progressive influence on Canadian politics.

The federal NDP went into the 2011 federal election as an important player on the Canadian federal scene with a well-established and popular leader. Given the unpopularity of the Liberals and their leader, the party was able to orchestrate what came to be known as the "Orange Wave" to achieve its highest level of electoral success in a federal election. In the 2011 federal election, the NDP increased its popular vote from 18 per cent to 31 per cent, and increased its seat count from 37 to 103, to catapult itself into Official Opposition status and relegate the once-dominant Liberals to third place. The result of the 2011 election was a Conservative majority government, but Layton

became the first CCF-NDP leader to hold the position of Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. The biggest story out of the 2011 federal election for the NDP was its performance in Quebec – the province where it had historically been irrelevant in federal and provincial elections. While the NDP had made marginal gains in all other provinces in the election, its popular vote skyrocketed in Quebec from 12 per cent to 43 per cent, and it went from maintaining only one seat in Quebec, to holding 59 out of the provinces 75 seats in the House of Commons. The charismatic leadership of Layton, implied sympathies for Quebec sovereignty expressed by the NDP under Layton through the 2005 'Sherbrooke Declaration' recognized the need for social democracy in Canada for Quebec to feel a part of the federal system, as well as campaign infrastructure in the province that had been built over previous decade, enabled this sudden growth of the NDP. Quebecers rejected the conservatism presented by the Harper government, the decades of Liberal status quo, as well as the separatist Bloc Quebecois whose sovereignty ambitions had been somewhat neutralized by the NDP's Sherbrook Declaration. With the party's spectacular gains in Quebec and its improved performance in other provinces, the party's electoral support was less regionalized and more widely spread throughout Canada than it had been at any other time in the CCF-NDP's history.

Though it would not be accurate to describe the federal NDP's ideology throughout the 2000s as "Third Way" under Layton's leadership, the period of the NDP's increased influence on federal politics did coincide with a slight moderation of its ideology. (McGrane, 2019, 177-211) Indeed, a brief review of the party's four election platforms from the 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011 elections reveals a trend of both continuity and change as the party edged rightward on the ideological spectrum. While the federal leadership of Alexa

McDonough from 1995 to 2003 was often associated with the Third Way with the adoption of centrist public policies such as tax cuts but denied the explicit adoption of the Third Way policy set. (Lawton, 29 August 1999, A9) A policy resolution to adopt Third Way-style policies in the party's platform at this convention was also defeated, with union leadership largely backing this opposition. In any case, Third Way policies could be very much associated with the governing Liberal Party throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, as much as the US Democratic Party embraced the Third Way, in the absence of a major US social democratic party.

Some elements of NDP platforms from 2004 to 2011 were remarkably consistent, demonstrating a clear social democratic ideological orientation for the party. All electoral policy platforms of the period featured an activist state that would intervene in the economy through tax credits to companies that create jobs, orderly marketing in agriculture, restricting foreign takeovers, industrial strategies for priority sectors, and various subsidies to promote the green economy and reduce climate change. The party's policies on women and minorities were also consistent in their advocacy of better pay equity and greater funding for women's groups, more family reunification for immigrants, recognizing Indigenous self-government and increasing funding to on-reserve education, and more government programs for disabled Canadians.

However, minor but notable changes from 2004 to 2011 to the federal NDP's election platforms indicate a rightward lean, such as a change in the tone of NDP platforms over the years in a way that strategists felt adapted to changing political environments and historical contexts. The number of commitments involving "national" strategies, plans, and standards was steadily reduced and replaced with commitments that were introduced by expressions such as "as

a practical first step toward" and "as finances permit." In terms of concrete policy proposals, the 2004 platform promised the creation of new publicly owned corporations to invest in renewable energy and to manufacture prescription drugs, but these promises went missing in NDP platforms from 2006 to 2011. There was also a subtle shift in how the NDP platforms dealt with deficits. The 2004 platform promised balanced budgets, "exempting years of extreme revenue shortfalls and disasters and acts of God," while the subsequent platforms simply committed to a balanced budget in every year of a federal NDP government no matter the circumstances that the government was facing. The NDP also dropped some of its more ambitious democratic reforms, such as lowering the voting age to 16 and designating seats for Indigenous peoples in the House of Commons between 2004 and 2011.

Similarly on foreign affairs, the NDP platforms eliminated more daring ideas, such as a "Tobin tax" (placing a small tax on all international monetary transactions) and forgiving the debt of developing nations, but maintained a commitment to more conventional ideas like increasing foreign aid to make up a greater percentage of Canada's GDP every year. While the NDP consistently advocated for higher corporate taxes from 2004 to 2011, it had gradually backed away from its insistence on raising taxes on rich individuals through measures like inheritance taxes and other wealth taxes by 2011. In terms of social policy, there remained a strong commitment to expanding social programs, but the scope of the commitment was circumscribed. A few examples of the differences between the 2004 and 2011 platforms will suffice: the target of 200,000 new child care spaces a year was reduced to 25,000 new child care spaces a year; reducing tuition by 10 per cent and freezing it at that level was changed to making postsecondary education "more affordable" through increased federal funding to the provinces;

a public prescription drug insurance program for all Canadians was replaced with an “aggressive” review of drug prices and hiring more doctors and nurses; and a 10-year strategy to build 200,000 new public housing units was reduced to a vague commitment of “new funding for affordable and social housing” and restoring funding to the residential rehabilitation assistance program that had been cut by the Conservatives.

The largest shifts in the NDP’s platforms from 2004 to 2011 took place in the areas of the environment, military, crime, labour policy, and trade policy. NDP platforms of the mid-2000s stressed rehabilitation, restorative justice, and the underlying causes of crime, such as poverty. By contrast, the 2011 platform pledged tougher punishments and hiring more police officers as the primary mechanisms for reducing crime. On the environment, earlier platforms of the Layton era were stringent in calling for moratoriums on certain types of economic activity (e.g., new development of the oil sands) and completely removing government subsidies to the oil, gas, and nuclear sectors. Later platforms focused on the less intrusive ideas of a cap-and-trade system as well as fostering research in green technology and renewable energy.

The NDP’s 2004 platform had a relatively strong emphasis on labour policy, with suggestions for anti-scab legislation, new national holidays, and a federal minimum wage. Similarly, the NDP called for the replacement of “undemocratic, corporate-driven trade deals” like the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization with fair trade agreements in 2004. However, the 2011 platform mentioned neither labour policy nor trade policy. When it comes to the military, earlier NDP platforms put forth the left-wing idea of a stronger commitment to peacekeeping and did not commit to raising military spending. By 2011, the NDP’s platform on the military had evolved considerably by identifying three priorities for Canada’s

military (peacekeeping, natural disaster relief, and defending Canada) and putting forth specific plans for purchasing more military equipment and improving services for Canadian veterans.

Overall, our examination of NDP platforms during the Layton years illustrates a moderation of the party's ideology from 2004 to 2011 – even if the party did not go as far to the right as the Third Way centre-left governments in Canada, and the Third Way governments elsewhere. After all, social policy and policies relating to women and minorities continued to make up large portions of the federal NDP's platform throughout the decade, and there continued to be an overarching commitment to promoting economic equality, expanding social programs, and deepening Canada's human rights regime. However, as the 2000s progressed, federal NDP platforms did eliminate some of the party's more ambitious left-wing policy proposals and did allocate more space to traditional concerns of right-wing parties like crime and military spending while de-emphasizing traditional left-wing concerns like public ownership, labour, and the environment. The Third Way evolution of the NDP, however, is somewhat notable in the provincial governments by social democrats in power during the height of neoliberalism, following the general trends of the Third Way around the world.

6
Provincial Governments from 2000 to Present

Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, several provincial wings of the NDP held power against strong conservative forces, particularly in Western Canada where various liberal parties faltered, through strong economic and social trends that reinforced regionalism. In Central Canada, the Ontario NDP has operated as the official opposition for most of the 2010s but has not formed government since the brief Bob Rae NDP government of the mid-1990s. In Quebec, there are some NDP sympathies with the various iterations of PQ governments and the upstart Quebec Solidaire, founded in 2006, in opposition, but as separatist political parties there has not been a full embrace of a provincial Quebec-wing of the NDP. Elsewhere, so-called "Western alienation" and twentieth century legacy of "prairie socialism" are just some of the trends that have enabled NDP governments to be elected in the provinces west of Ontario since the turn of the millennium: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Colombia. (Lipset, 1950) Additionally, the Atlantic province of Nova Scotia also elected the first NDP government ever for the region at this time in 2009, but it may also have been a "flash in the pan" after one term. A brief overview of provincial NDP administrations since 2000 is notable, demonstrating once again strong social democratic governance

across Canada as an influential force, despite the contemporary struggles of the federal NDP.

6.1. Nova Scotia New Democratic Party

While never holding more than four seats in the Nova Scotia legislature throughout most of the twentieth century, the Nova Scotia NDP made its first electoral breakthrough in the 1998 provincial election, winning 19 out of the House of Assembly's 52 seats to tie them with the governing Liberal Party, who went on to govern as a minority with the support of the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservatives who held 14 seats. This precarious situation turned into a subsequent election a year later where party leader Robert Chisholm had stepped down after a reduction in seats that saw the PCs win a majority government. At the start of the twenty-first century, the NS NDP came to be led by Darrell Dexter who oversaw electoral growth for the party as Nova Scotia became something of a three-party province. After decades of Liberal and PC exchanges of power, precarious minority legislatures due to the rise of the NS NDP by the early 2000s led to consecutive early elections in 2003, 2006 and 2009. Never winning more than four seats until 1998, the NS NDP could later distance themselves from the spending cuts and tax increases imposed by successive Liberal and PC governments. The Dexter leadership continued to make gains as the party's campaigns centralized around his leadership, offering a moderate agenda compared to the more social democratic platforms previously offered by the NS NDP. It was in 2009 that Dexter's NS NDP made its breakthrough and formed a majority government led by a social democratic party for the first time in the province's history.

Premier Dexter's administration was described as "Third Way"

by some observers, as he campaigned on deficit reductions while committing to keeping hospital emergency rooms open. (Clancy, 2015, 92) Issues with the budget deficit question were exacerbated by the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis and the previous Conservative government's pre-election spending in order to hold on to power. As a part of their affordability measures, the Nova Scotia NDP removed the Harmonized Sales Tax (the provincial and federal consumption tax) from home electricity bills, along with a suite other social programming. However, in maintaining their campaign promises, tuition hikes on post-secondary education, and budget freezes in the healthcare sector were implemented while the deficit ballooned still ballooned despite the NS NDP's commitments to keep it under control. The Dexter government was able to present a balanced budget by the final year before the 2013 election, and despite mostly keeping to its 2009 promises, the NS NDP was routed to only seven seats in the legislature with 27 per cent of the vote while the Liberal Party won a majority 33 seats with 46 per cent of the vote.

Some argued that this shift appeared "paradoxical" since there did not appear to be any sharp controversies or major issues that shaped this realignment to the Liberals. (Clancy, 2015, 102). Several criticisms of district boundary changes, failed communications campaigns, and some quarrels with labour and industry may have contributed to the defeat, but the three-way party dynamics of Nova Scotia have continued to this day, that sets the conditions where the party winning the slimmest plurality is able to win a majority government due to the province's electoral dynamics. Liberal and Progressive Conservative majority governments elected in 2017 and 2021 have been won with less than 39 per cent of the vote.

Dexter resigned as party leader after the 2013 defeat and the NS NDP remained with interim leader Maureen MacDonald for nearly three

years until the election of Gary Burrill as leader in 2016. Burrill marked somewhat of a return to the NS NDP's social democratic roots in terms of electoral policy, however, the party could not break its third-party status during his tenure and remained at 6 to 7 seats with around 21 per cent of the vote in 2017 and 2021 elections. Resigning soon after the 2021 election, Claudia Chender was then elected NS NDP leader in 2022 and in 2024, overtook the Liberals in seat count to become the official opposition under Tim Houston's majority Progressive Conservative government. Despite the NS NDP and NS Liberals earning a virtual tie in the percentage of the vote (22.2 per cent and 22.7 per cent, respectively), the concentration of the NDP vote in the urban Halifax area won the party 9 seats to the Liberals' 2 seats.

6.2. New Democratic Party of Manitoba

The Manitoba NDP returned to power in 1999, after more than a decade in opposition that followed two decades of governing, under the leadership of Premier Gary Doer. The previous governments of Edward Schreyer and Howard Pawley were marked by major tax reforms and investments in public infrastructure like hydroelectricity and public housing, but fell due to increasing pressures on these fiscally expansive programs during the height of the global neoliberal reaction. By this time, some Third Way influence moderated the Manitoba NDP's administration that was less progressively programmatic than the province's earlier NDP governments, and instead retained many of the neoliberal and economic policies pioneered by the previous Conservative government. (Sheldrick, 2015, pp. 196) Nonetheless, to differentiate itself from its right-wing rivals, the Manitoba NDP moved forward on social policies while maintaining the support of organized

labour to win consecutive elections. The success of the Third Way in Manitoba held due, in part, on the electoral dynamics of the province and its unique political economy that did not rely on resources, developed slow economic growth, while harbouring a historically radical labour constituency centred in the provincial capital of Winnipeg. (Sheldrick, 2015, 197)

Doer retired from the Premiership and Manitoba NDP leadership in 2009 and was replaced by Greg Selinger who went on to deliver another election victory in 2011. By the 2016 election, due to the unpopularity of increases to the regressive Provincial Sales Tax (the provincial portion to the nation-wide value-added tax, complemented by the federal Goods and Services Tax), the Selinger government was defeated and replaced by the right-wing Progressive Conservative Party led by Brian Pallister. Prominent Indigenous broadcaster Wabanakwut "Wab" Kinew was elected as Manitoba NDP leader in 2017, and contested the 2019 election, growing the NDP's caucus in the Legislature. After several pandemic-related setbacks for the Manitoba PCs, and the replacement of Pallister with Heather Stefanson in 2021, Kinew's NDP was elected to govern in 2023, bringing forward a diverse cabinet led by Canada's first provincial premier of First Nations descent.

6.3. Saskatchewan New Democratic Party

Before the 2000s, the Saskatchewan NDP governed the province for nearly a decade under the Premiership of Roy Romanow, beginning in 1991. During this period, the Saskatchewan NDP has been described as following the neoliberal "Third Way" trends throughout its governance in the 1990s. (McGrane, 2008) After three successful elections, Romanow announced his retirement in 2000 and was

succeeded by Lorne Calvert. Considered a left-ward social democratic turn under Calvert, the Saskatchewan NDP continued its dominance with new social spending fuelled by the booming potash fertilizer industry that enabled further prosperity.

Through its nearly two decades of governance, the Saskatchewan NDP maintained several state-owned crown corporations that were legacy establishments of the CCF before them, such as the public SaskTel telecom company, that preserved a modicum of public ownership while other provinces saw the sell off and privatization of their public assets where conservative and liberal regimes ruled. Premier Calvert announced his retirement as well in 2008, but after two decades of incumbency, the Saskatchewan NDP fell to the right-wing Saskatchewan Party led by Brad Wall in the 2011 provincial election. The Saskatchewan Party has since governed the province for more than a decade, while the NDP had turned over three other party leaders since losing government. Today, led by Carla Beck, the Saskatchewan NDP recently saw new growth in their support during the October 2024 provincial election. While winning in the province's urban seats in Regina and Saskatoon, the party still has room to grow and recapture historically won rural seats that first gave rise to the CCF in the earlier twentieth century, where farmers movements organized the early social democratic movements in Canada.

6.4. Alberta New Democratic Party

The province of Alberta had been previously described as a "one-party state," dominated by the centre-right Progressive Conservative party since the 1970s. (Patten, 2015, 255) Three decades of electoral dominance was then challenged by the emergence of right-wing federal elements based in Western Canada regionalism

in the form of the federal right-wing Reform Party in the 1990s which influenced the rise of the provincial Alberta Alliance/Wildrose Party by 2002. Meanwhile, through the 2000s the Alberta NDP held between 2-4 seats in the provincial legislature. After serving as Alberta NDP leader for a decade, Brian Mason stepped down in 2014 and paved the way for the selection of Rachel Notley, the daughter of long-time former Alberta NDP leader Grant Notley from 1968 to 1984, as party leader.

Despite the strong historical tendencies of conservatism in Alberta's political landscape, the Spring 2015 Alberta Election saw the NDP win a majority government with a plurality of 41 per cent of the vote. Several factors contributed to this surprise victory that some observe as outside of the NDP's control in terms of policy and campaign. First, as a resource extraction-dependent country, the global oil price collapse beginning in 2014 suddenly led to recessionary conditions in the province, creating unemployment and precarity that the right-wing electoral parties had little answer for. (Bank of Canada Review, 2017). The rivalry between the two right-wing parties, the Progressive Conservative Party and the Wildrose Party, also helped to split the vote in favour of the NDP. This favoured the NDP in urban constituencies across the province where progressive support translated into won seats in many three-way races.

The break from being a "one-party" conservative state, to the sudden appearance of a social democratic government was certainly a new dynamic in Alberta's politics by 2015 and occurred shortly before that fall's federal election with implications on proceeding events on the federal party. The Alberta NDP, during this time of economic crisis for the province's energy industry, took to preserving public services and focused on infrastructure spending stimulus to help Albertans recover from the shock of global energy price volatilities. Alberta faced

its strongest deficits in nearly two decades, but criticism of this policy approach was not severe among the electorate, (Hussey & Graff-Mcrae, 2016) following the national trend of increased public spending for economic recovery and growth. On environmental issues, the Alberta NDP government introduced a carbon pricing, that seemed at odds with the resource extraction industry but was also communicated as giving social license to continue oil production. The oil industry reliant Alberta NDP then came into conflict with the British Columbia NDP government to the west over the expansion of the Transmountain Pipeline that would increase the transport of energy products to the West Coast for export to Asian markets. Schisms between environmentalists, industrial and trades unions, the federal government and the federal NDP continue to have implications to this day.

Reeling from the 2015 defeat, the two right-wing parties merged in 2017 to form the United Conservative Party of Alberta, after a leadership race of the Alberta PC Party won by former federal cabinet Minister Jason Kenney who ran on a platform vowing to negotiate a merger with the Wildrose Party. The NDP was defeated by the renewed UCP in the 2019 election but reduced still to its second-best showing at the time in seats. Continuing under Notley into the 2023 election, the Alberta NDP increased their seat share to 38, marking a stronger challenge in opposition compared to the one-party hegemony in decades prior. Notley stepped down as leader shortly after, and in 2024 former Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi was elected as leader of the Alberta NDP with an overwhelming 86 per cent majority vote over his rivals. Strictly stating non-partisanship throughout his Mayorship (he was not a party member when he chose to run and required special permission by the Alberta NDP to run), Nenshi immediately began debate over whether the Alberta NDP would break from the federal party. The volatility and schisms of Western Alienation, environmentalism, and economic

conditions seemingly outside the control of the Alberta NDP, that may have helped the party win government in 2015, may have also called in to question the relationships between the provincial wings of the NDP and the federal party.

6.5. British Columbia New Democratic Party

At times, called the "Left Coast" of Canada (Francis, 2013), the western province of British Columbia has enjoyed consecutive NDP administrations since 2017, but entered the 2000s in somewhat of a crisis. After the successive BC NDP governments of Premiers Mike Harcourt and Glen Clark beginning in 1991, following brief corruption scandals that saw both resign during their terms despite holding on to majority governments, the BC NDP entered the 2000s under the leadership of Ujjal Dosanjh as Premier of BC. The BC NDP, however, could not recover from its reputation and internal disputes and was devasted at the polls, losing its 39-seat majority and having its legislative status revoked by winning only 2 seats after receiving nearly 22 per cent of the vote. The BC Liberals won a dominant 77 of 79 seats with 58 per cent of the vote led by former Vancouver Mayor Gordon Campbell.

After being replacing Dosanjh as leader of the BC NDP, Carole James picked back up the party's fortunes in the 2005 election, restoring the party to 33 seats in the legislature with nearly 41 per cent of the vote. The following election under James in 2009 still saw a close popular vote between the BC Liberals and BC NDP, within only 3 percentage points separating the parties, however, due to the vote distribution and the majoritarian plurality electoral system, Campbell's Liberals won another majority. With her leadership called into question

by dissenting caucus members, James resigned in 2010 despite some surprising electoral success and was succeeded by Adrian Dix as leader of the BC NDP in 2011. Following the near successes and growth of his predecessor, Dix was expected to win the 2013 provincial election, with all polling showing a lead that was far ahead of the BC Liberals under Christy Clark for the entirety of the campaign. The ballot at the end had the BC Liberals win fourth consecutive majority government by nearly 5 percentage points, which led to the resignation of Adrian Dix.

John Horgan was acclaimed as BC NDP Leader in 2014 and, after nearly two decades of struggle as the opposition, the 2017 BC election proved to be a unique opportunity for the NDP. The results of the 2017 election returned 43 Liberal seats, 41 NDP seats, and a record 3 BC Green party seats, between 40.46 percent, 40.28 percent, and 16.84 percent of the vote respectively. As a result of the "hung parliament," the BC Green Party under Andrew Weaver negotiated support for a minority parliament (not a minority government) between both the Liberals and the NDP. After much deliberation among the small but powerful caucus of Green Party legislators, seeing a willing partner in the NDP who could review energy projects with strong environmental impacts such as the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Site C Dam, as well as demands on electoral reform, the Greens formalized a parliamentary "supply and confidence agreement" to support a minority NDP government from the legislature. (Shaw & Zussman, 2018)

During the Horgan Premiership, while reviews of the environmental impacts of major projects took place as a condition of the supply and confidence agreement with the Greens, they did not have the intended outcome for the Greens due to the sunk costs of the previous Liberal government regarding the Site C Dam projects, and the federal Liberal government's control over the Trans Mountain pipeline. The Horgan

government held a referendum on electoral reform across the province in 2018, in accordance with the supply and confidence agreement, on whether to maintain the "first-past-the-post" status quo majoritarian voting system, or to preferred form of proportional representation. The referendum ultimately fell in favour of maintaining the status quo, with 61 per cent voting in favour of the current first-past-the-post system.

While some climate, health insurance, and human rights reforms took place during most of Horgan's first term in office, including legislation to adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the COVID-19 Pandemic that began amid the third year of Horgan's government lent to a number of emergency measures such as paid sick leave, supplements to emergency benefits, and a new top income tax bracket. Horgan, however, felt that the minority government situation did not help expedite emergency legislation and left British Columbians waiting for more measures. A snap election was called in October 2020, before the rollout of mass vaccinations and while many public health measures were still in place, where the BC NDP won a strong 57 seat majority in the legislature with 48 per cent of the vote. With a comfortable majority under the second Horgan government, the BC NDP was able to effectively extend pandemic measures, such as making paid sick leave a permanent requirement of employers, in addition to other climate and human rights measures.

In October 2021, Horgan was diagnosed with a malignant growth that required medical treatment. After surgery and recovery, Horgan continued as Premier of BC until June 2022 when he announced that he would step down after a leadership race. David Eby was acclaimed as Horgan's successor and made Premier on October 2022 by the BC NDP. Meanwhile, under the leadership of Kevin Falcon starting in 2022, the previously governing BC Liberals underwent a name change and rebrand of the party to become BC United. After the name change,

however, the party experienced a dramatic fall in support that was falling to the BC Conservatives that had remained a very marginal force in BC politics since the Second World War. Under the leadership of John Rustad, himself previously a BC Liberal Cabinet Minister, the BC Conservatives began to supplant support for the BC United, developing over the latter half of 2023 and into 2024 ahead of the October 2024 election. The vote splitting that took place between the BC United and BC Conservatives would have made conditions favourable for an easy NDP return to majority government by that year's election. Recognizing the falling vote share and shared political goals with the Conservatives, the BC United party collapsed and suspended its campaign less than two months before election day. With a stronger two-way race by the October 2024 election, the Conservatives were able to challenge the BC NDP and as a result, reduced the government's seat count to just a one seat majority difference from falling to a minority in the legislature – 47 seats to the NDP, 44 seats to the Conservatives, and 2 seats won by the Greens. After more than a week of voting recounts due to tight electoral races, a majority BC NDP government led by Premier Eby was officially declared on November 8, 2024.

7
Official Opposition and Crash of the "Orange Wave" (2011-2015)

At the federal level, in a dramatic turn of events, Jack Layton died from cancer shortly after the 2011 election. He was replaced by Quebec MP Tom Mulcair, who in turn became the Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. Under Mulcair's leadership, the federal NDP was at the zenith of its influence on Canadian federal politics. (McGrane, 2019, 161-176) With the Liberals mired in a leadership race and struggling to adjust to their new role as the third-place party in the House of Commons, the federal NDP became the primary opposition to the Conservative majority government's right-wing agenda. With its large team of MPs and the media's attention focused daily on Tom Mulcair's performance in the House, the federal NDP was instrumental in shaping Canadian political discourse in the lead up to the 2015 federal election by advocating for many left-wing policy ideas that provided a sharp contrast to the direction that the Conservatives were taking the country. Arguably, the NDP during the first years of Mulcair's leadership exercised a great deal of progressive influence on Canadian federal politics, perhaps to the party's greatest extent throughout its CCF-NDP history.

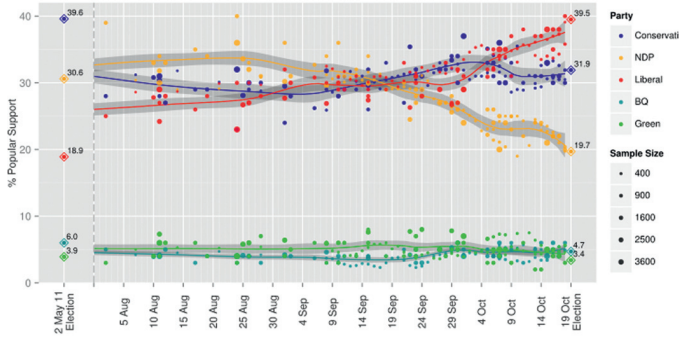
The federal NDP went into the 2015 federal election either leading in most public domain polls, or trailing the governing Conservatives

by only a few percentage points. With the Liberals polling in third place far behind both the NDP and the Conservatives, the possibility of realizing the dream of a NDP federal government seemed closer than ever before. Early in the campaign, Mulcair released the NDP's election platform. Several parts of the program were similar to the 2011 electoral platform. Policy proposals around reducing small business taxation, raising the corporate tax rate, balancing the budget, introducing a cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse gases, hiring more police officers, and hiring more nurses and doctors were virtually identical in 2011 and 2015. Nonetheless, in certain areas it was evident that the NDP's platform in 2015 was more ambitious and left wing than the party's 2011 platform. The 2015 platform promised one million childcare spaces over eight years at cost of $15 CAD a day, compared to the 2011 promise of 100,000 spaces over four years with no mention of regulating the cost of those spaces. Whereas the 2011 platform had contained a vague pledge to lower prescription drug costs when finances permitted, the 2015 platform boldly claimed that an NDP government would work toward universal public drug coverage for all Canadians that would lower prescription drug costs by 30 per cent. The 2011 NDP platform had been silent on labour policy, free trade agreements, and illicit drugs. In contrast, the 2015 NDP platform committed to the decriminalization of marijuana and ensuring that Canada's trade agreements improved social, environmental, and labour standards in partner countries. These policies would try and appeal to a broad, socially progressive constituency that the NDP was able to capture from the Liberal Party during the 2011 election.

The NDP also came out strongly against the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a proposed free trade agreement among twelve Pacific rim countries, during the final two weeks of the 2015 election campaign because it feared a loss of jobs in the dairy and auto sectors. In a clear

move to the left, the 2015 NDP platform pledged not only to repeal several pieces of labour legislation passed by the Harper government, but also to introduce legislation banning use of replacement workers during strike and a $15 per hour federal minimum wage. Given these differences between the 2011 and 2015 platform, it appeared that, if the NDP under Mulcair was to form the federal government, it would have a policy agenda slightly to the left of what the federal NDP had promised to do in the 2011 election. As such, it is difficult to describe the ideology of federal NDP under Mulcair as completely and thoroughly "Third Way," however, an initial election promise at the beginning of the campaign to "balance the budget" was seen as a nod towards austerity and against fiscal expansion. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party made no such promises trough their 2015 campaign. There were attempts to walk back this promise in the latter weeks of this long campaign, yet, this shift in the policy agenda was too little, too late.

Opinion Polling during the 2015 Canadian Federal Election



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Opinion_Polling_during_the_2015_Canadian_Federal_Election.svg

Despite the party's optimism about the potential for it to form government at the outset of the campaign, the 2015 election proved to be bitterly disappointing. The party slowly lost support during the campaign as the mantle of the main alternative to the governing Conservatives was gradually passed to the Liberals and their energetic and youthful new leader, Justin Trudeau. Despite the a nominally progressive platform, there was a major perception that the NDP was "outflanked" on the left due to their campaign messages and shifts in policy agenda that could not capture the attention of Canadian voters. The NDP had lost the message on fighting on economic issues, having been constrained by earlier its balanced budget promise. The Liberals ended up improving their popular vote from 19 per cent in 2011 to almost 40 per cent in 2015 resulting in 148 more seats for the party in the House of Commons and a majority Liberal government. The Conservatives lost 60 seats and went from 40 per cent of the popular vote to 32 per cent of the popular vote and became the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. The NDP's popular vote dropped from 31 per cent to 20 per cent and the party fell from 103 seats to 44 seats. While the NDP made small seat gains in Canada's western provinces, the party lost all of the 6 seats that it held in four provinces on Canada's Atlantic coast and went from 22 seats to 8 seats in Ontario. Worse yet, the federal NDP's historic breakthrough in Quebec in the previous election was largely reversed as the party relinquished its short-lived electoral dominance of the province by falling from 59 seats down to only 16 seats. In summary, the House of Commons after the 2015 election looked like it had throughout the previous century: a comfortable Liberal majority, a Conservative Official Opposition, and the NDP relegated to junior opposition status, with highly regionalized electoral support.

8
Coup, Crisis, Confidence and Collapse (2016 to Present)

8.1. Coup (2016-2019)

The collapse of the federal NDP, from Official Opposition status to become the third party after playing campaigning in the 2015 federal election as "the government-in-waiting", dealt a massive blow while the new Liberal government played up its progressive image from its campaign amid new international attention. Only 6 months after the fall election, a previously scheduled party convention took place in Edmonton, Alberta where the governing Alberta NDP was at odds with their federal counterparts over the continued development of oil and gas infrastructure. During the 2015 campaign, many notable environmentalists, Indigenous leaders, labour unions and other prolific progressive Canadians signed on to the Leap Manifesto, proposing a more aggressively progressive suite of policies to tackle climate change, Indigenous Reconciliation, inequality, and a range of other social and economic issues. While initially produced as a non-partisan Manifesto, a strong contingent of NDP members saw the party's failure in the 2015 election as a result of the Liberals electoral strategy that "campaigned to the left, while the NDP campaigned to the right" while

the NDP ignored their calls to action during the campaign. (Geddes, 4 September 2015)

The Leap Manifesto and its adoption became a strong point of contention at the April 2016 Party Convention as a policy resolution recognizing its goals and values, while the Alberta NDP, as the reigning provincial government and host province of the convention, opposed some of its environmental proposals. The policy resolution in support of the Leap Manifesto was ultimately accepted by members at the convention. Mulcair's leadership, in not outright rejecting the Manifesto, was seen by some in the Alberta NDP as acrimonious to their province's economic wellbeing. (Bellefontaine and Trynacity, 8 April 2016) Others supporting the Manifesto were still upset that a broadly supported platform was not adopted by the NDP during the campaign, while the Trudeau Liberals could draw on superficial affinities for some of the Leap's stated goals that would then mask the reality of their inaction. After the vote on the Leap Manifesto, Mulcair faced a convention leadership review and, for the first time ever, a Canadian federal party leader was removed by its membership, triggering a long leadership election that would be held on October 2017.

Jagmeet Singh, an Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament, was selected by the NDP membership winning a majority of votes among party members on the first around of ranked ballot voting against several other candidates which included sitting MPs from the federal caucus. As the first elected, racialized leader of a federal political party who also wore religious garments related to his Sikh identity, Singh was seen as representing a younger, diverse Canada that contrasted with Trudeau's patrilineage, while maintaining a media savviness that could compete with the Liberal Prime Minister. During the leadership race, his fashionable style and handling of racist incidents helped to draw Canadian and international attention to his campaign, (Nocos, 10

February 2017) which the federal NDP had hoped would translate into a recovery after 2015's massive defeat. After a less than stellar start to his leadership, a by-election to fill a seat vacancy by former NDP MP Kennedy Stewart who sought to run for Mayor of Vancouver, opened a safe constituency for Singh to enter the House of Commons as NDP leader.

Falling far behind in the polls to start the 2019 election throughout the first term of the Trudeau government majority, the NDP at the time took cues from electoral energy of the insurgent Bernie Sanders presidential nomination campaign in the United States, and Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership in the UK, to develop a more progressive left-wing policy platform. The 2019 NDP Platform entitled *A New Deal for the People*, hinting at the growing support for a "Green New Deal" that galvanized around the earlier Sanders campaign that sought to revive Keynesian policy sets for the purposes of climate action, was put forward by the party and leaned more left wing than the previous Layton or Mulcair platforms. Learning from the 2015 experience, the approach had hoped to give the party some distance from the left-ward campaigning of the Liberals that previously hurt the NDP's prospects. (McGrane, 2020)

With stronger tax-the-rich measures, and proposals for environmental regulations, the campaign presented somewhat of a departure from the Third Way and found corollaries with socialist stalwarts who were finding some electoral successes abroad. However, the overall downward trends that the party could not be overcome, and despite the Prime Minster finding himself in a major scandal over past racist behaviour amid the campaign, the NDP's share of seats dropped by 15, reducing its caucus to 24 members, while losing almost the entirety of the Quebec caucus that came from the previous 2011 Orange Wave. For the NDP, the feeling was that this could have been

much worse—that despite dropping to fourth place status beneath the separatist Bloc Quebecois, and not seeing the breakthroughs in urban centres promised by a Singh leadership, the party was not totally reduced to its historic lows. (McGrane, 2020).

The reduced status also came with a new opportunity: the Trudeau Liberals could not maintain a majority government, falling 13 seats short of the 170 needed to maintain its all-powerful status in the House of Commons. In fact, the Liberals lost the popular vote, taking only 33.12 percent compared to the Conservative Party of Canada's 34.34 per cent, who only netted 121 seats due to the distribution of its voter base. Though some criticized Singh for somewhat celebrating a rather dismal electoral performance on paper, (Tanner, 22 October 2019) that the NDP was not completely decimated despite the polls and given the Parliamentary scenario, like CCF and NDP leaders before him, Singh vowed to use the circumstances to push forward on common agenda items from its electoral platform. Despite its reduced status, the NDP would continue its historical Parliamentary role under a minority government, given the party's pivotal position.

8.2. Crisis (2020-2022)

The 43rd Parliament opened in December 2019 with the reduced Trudeau Liberals ruling out a formal coalition or informal agreement with any of the parties in the House of Commons. They would continue to govern as a minority Parliament, negotiating with the opposition parties on an ad hoc basis on any legislation, though historically this has lent to legislative gridlock and premature elections as soon as the minority government loses the confidence of the House. It was only a month after the return from the 2020 holiday break that Parliament implemented a 5-week long closure due to the onset of

the COVID-19 pandemic, convening throughout the initial months of the crisis remotely to pass legislation on emergency benefits and other measures. Holding the balance of power in the House, the NDP lent support for the government's legislation to implement emergency income supports, rent subsidies, student loan support, changes to employment insurance for sickness benefits, as well as increased tax benefits and other measures to protect Canadians made increasingly vulnerable by the spread of COVID-19 and the sudden and temporary mass unemployment. The NDP would continue to support the Liberals on condition of the extension of some of these benefits into 2021 and further on into 2022.

Out of the political opportunities provided to the NDP, despite its reduced seat count from 2019, the minority Parliament and COVID-19 pandemic drew the party and Canada's labour movement closer, seeing another opportunity as well to overhaul federal labour codes, increase minimum wages, and expand healthcare to include Pharmacare. (McGrane, 2022) Leading into 2021 after the initial round of pandemic measures and lockdowns, Singh had polled to be a relatively popular party leader compared to Trudeau and newly-elected Conservative leader Erin O'Toole. Less than two years into the 43rd Parliament, Justin Trudeau called for a snap pandemic election, taking cues from the success of the BC NDP's mid-pandemic campaign the year earlier, to vie for a majority government with a new mandate claiming, "to ensure voters approved of his Liberal government's plan to recover form the COVID-19 pandemic," despite passing well-received measures with the cooperation of the NDP throughout the previous session. (Ljunggren & Scherer, 15 August 2021)

Although the NDP held a more favourable outlook towards their electoral prospects, having prepared for a snap election given the minority Parliament outcome of 2019, the September 2021 federal

election resulted in another disappointing stalemate. (McGrane, 2022) While the Conservatives again won the popular vote 33.74 per cent to the Liberal Party's 32.62 per cent, they saw no change in their seat count; the Liberals again found themselves a few seats shy of a minority Parliament; the NDP grew their caucus by one seat, while remaining in fourth place behind the Bloc Quebecois. Though the NDP could not capitalize on running again on a similar left-wing policy platform as the 2019 election, with the addition of the pandemic emergency benefits and falling approval of Trudeau's leadership, the outcome by Canadian voters foiled the objectives of all the federal political parties.

After opening the session in November 2021, the 44th Parliament was thrown immediately into a winter of discontent. Echoing the global trend of far-right insurrections, in the aftermath of the January 6 US Capitol Attack the previous year, while also picking up from where the 2019 Canadian yellow vests movement took off (a far-right offshoot of the *gilets jaunes* in France), the so-called "Freedom Convoy" protests and blockades in Ottawa and across Canada began in January 2022. The anti-government protests opposing vaccine and public health measures implemented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic up until that time resulted in major implications for Canada's political landscape, including the NDP. As a result of his tepid response to the Convoy, Conservative leader Erin O'Toole was ousted in early February 2022, at the height of the protests, by caucus members who expressed sympathies with the far-right elements of the protests, along with others upset by the recent electoral stalemate and policy stances from that campaign that approximated the Liberal Party's platform. (Aiello, 4 February 2022) The convoy protests largely subsided by the end of February, but not without major political implications for the 2025 federal election.

8.3. Confidence (2022-2024)

Given the political crisis within the Conservative Party, and the continued crisis at the gates to Parliament Hill where far-right protesters continued their demonstration, the NDP saw an opportunity to advance a progressive agenda while the Liberal minority government needed to use the moment to reinforce itself amid its continued precarity. Singh's NDP and the Trudeau Liberals announced a "supply and confidence agreement," whereby New Democrats in the House of Commons would vote with the Liberal government to support it's continued administration on the condition of passing an agreed to legislative agenda. This would include the extension of Canada's healthcare system to include dental care and pharmacare—the largest expansion of Medicare since its first nation-wide implementation. To support the NDP's labour agenda, the Liberals also agreed to passing the *Sustainable Jobs Act* as a just transition measure for job re-training and "anti-scab" legislation to prohibit the use of replacement workers by employers during lock outs and strikes. In addition to a full agenda on housing, child care, energy efficiency programming, tax reform, Indigenous Reconciliation, and some democratic reforms, the agreement between the NDP and Liberals set a fairly comprehensive policy agenda that both could agree to until the next scheduled election in 2025.

The agreement was not a "coalition government," as some commentators and conservative framing may argue – supply and confidence agreements are a familiar mechanism in Westminster Parliamentary systems where minority governments are commonplace, and coalition governments are rare. These agreements are typically struck between two or more political parties in a legislature who agree to refrain from voting against or to abstaining on votes of confidence. In exchange, the supply of budgetary measures in support of a legislative

agenda would also be met to maintain the confidence of the House. Though this was a historically unprecedented use of the mechanism in Ottawa, only a few years earlier the BC NDP used a supply and confidence agreement to bring forward its 2017 minority government after coming to terms with the BC Greens who held the balance of power in its provincial legislature. While this would differ from the historical ad hoc use of the balance of power that the CCF-NDP previously used to entrench social democracy across Canada, this was an opportunity for certainty in delivering an agenda, whereas the previous approach could potentially leave left-wing policies on the table at the behest of political gamesmanship, such as the abandonment of a national childcare program during the Liberal minority governments of the 2000s. Though used for the first time in Canada's Parliament, short of a coalition government, this stronger and formalized arrangement, compared to the ad hoc and precarious approach of previous minority Parliaments, had never been done before.

The agreement lent to political stability and the advancement of progressive policy measures amid falling Liberal popularity, with the expectation that the arrangement would be in place until June 2025, unless terms and conditions of the agreement were violated or the parties had good reason to unilaterally end it. Foundational within the agreement itself, "to ensure coordination on this arrangement, both political parties commit to a guiding principle of 'no surprises'." (Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, 22 March 2022). During this period of relative stability, several items from the agreement were legislated and, the starting phases of programming like dental care and pharmacare were implemented throughout 2023 and into 2024. Meanwhile, the Conservatives elected career politician Pierre Poilievre as the leader of the opposition in September 2022, who continued to ride a wave of right-wing sympathies for the convoy protests. While stating his support

for the convoy, (Taylor, 9 November 2022) Poilievre was able to build off the tight electoral races that were effectively won by the Conservatives in 2019 and 2021, were it not for the geographic distribution of their vote, along with nearly a decade of voter fatigue with the Trudeau government. Poilievre headed into the 2025 election with a major lead over the Liberal Party, according to opinion polling.

With major initiatives of the supply and confidence agreement met by Summer 2024, and as the government's growing unpopularity became increasingly tied to the NDP despite the positive response to expanded social programs brought forward by the agreement, Singh announced the early termination of the formal agreement in September 2024. A few other items from the Agreement such as democratic reform and Indigenous Reconciliation could not find conclusion by the time of closing, however, it was evident that the legislative timeline and political will had been exhausted by dental care, pharmacare, child care, sustainable jobs, and anti-scab legislation that had already been implemented. Asserting the party's election readiness, Singh and the NDP's announcement terminating the agreement stated that, "voting non-confidence will be on the table with each and every confidence measure," (New Democratic Party of Canada, 4 September 2024) while sounding like a strategic shift towards a more adversarial legislative rivalry, it has been the normalized approach to minority Parliaments throughout Canadian history.

Throughout the fall in the lead up to the election, the NDP and Liberals found some common ground on measures outside the terms of the supply and confidence agreement including a cut to the federal portion of the value added tax on essentials. The policy idea, inspired by affordability measures like the German gas price brake of 2022 and the US Presidential election where affordability was at the forefront of voters' issues, was originally proposed by the NDP

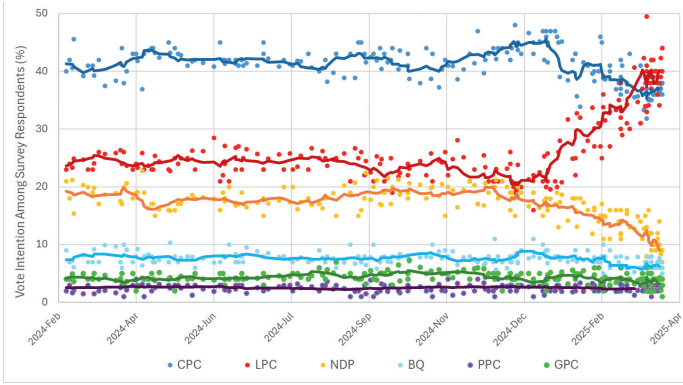
as a permanent GST tax cut on items such as groceries, coupled with a windfall profits tax to prevent profiteering out of the new price vacuum. (New Democratic Party of Canada, 14 November 2024) A week after this announcement, the Liberal government announced a short-term 2024-25 holiday stimulus tax cut ahead of the looming election. (Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, 21 November 2024). While not the full proposal the NDP put forward, the party nevertheless supported this measure to deliver immediate relief, while continuing to campaign on the originally proposed affordability measures. With an early 2025 election projected, the NDP has continued to set itself up as a progressive alternative to the Liberals, leading with the results of the supply and confidence agreement to demonstrate how they forced the government's hand on finally implementing long-awaited promises. As key Liberal members of the government announced their resignations in December 2024, a leadership race was held among the Liberal Party and former Bank of Canada Governor was selected by a majority of party delegates as the new Prime Minister in February 2025. Almost immediately, given the opportunity of changing polling fortunes given Trudeau's resignation, a renewed patriotism rallying around opposition to US President Donald Trump's Trade War and threats of United States annexation of Canada, as well as the timing of several major provincial elections held in recent months, a federal election was triggered by Carney almost immediately to take place for April 28th, 2025.

8.4. Collapse (Early 2025)

The 2025 Federal Election was quickly delivered to take advantage of the Liberal Party's dramatic polling fortunes, having experienced a low of 16 percent of the vote as recently as January 2025, to reaching leading 40-45 percent by the start of the election campaign in March

2025. The snap election did not take political parties by surprise as they had been preparing for this election since the end of the Confidence and Supply Agreement earlier that fall, however, the breathtaking turn in polling that helped to trigger the election resulted in all federal parties both wildly achieving and missing election goals.

2025 Canada Federal Election Polling



For the Liberal Party, the sudden polling turnaround led many previous cabinet and caucus members to reverse their earlier resignations and election intentions to run again. While the Liberals again won a plurality of seats, the surge was still not enough to break free of its minority government status, continuing to require ad hoc negotiations with the other parties in the House of Commons. This will likely result in another federal election well before the end of the current cycle in 2029.

The Conservative Party achieved even more votes and seats in this election than the previous, with gains made in key population centres in the Southern Ontario region. However, the Conservatives still could

not muster a plurality of seats and its own leader, Pierre Poilievre, did not win his own constituency of Nepean—Carleton in Ontario which he had represented since 2004. The Conservatives took this defeat while making historic gains and were required to ask a sitting caucus member to resign and force a byelection that Poilievre could safely win for a seat in Battle River—Crowfoot, Alberta in Summer 2025.

For the New Democrats, the campaign shifted in the middle of the election period in an appeal to voters to elect as many NDP members as possible to hold the balance of power and continue to hold the Liberal government in check to extract concessions as it had previously done. The NDP certainly succeeded in the goal of maintaining this pivotal position in the House of Commons, however, the party faced a major collapse in vote and seats, reduced from the 2021 election: from 18 percent of the vote to 6 percent, and from 17 seats to only 7 seats. This had been its worst result since its first contested election in 1962, a record previously held during the 1993 election that saw 7 percent of the vote and just 9 seats (in a 295 seat House of Commons versus today's 343). While at the time of writing it may be too early to assess the causes for this historic collapse, and what it means for the future of the federal NDP, so-called "strategic voting" among mainstream progressive voters appeared to have a substantial impact on the 2025 electoral outcome (Givens, 29 April 2025).

Upon the election results, federal leader Jagmeet Singh announced his resignation, triggering a new federal leadership race, and selection by party membership slated for early 2026. The electoral result has also meant that the NDP has not met the minimum 12 seat threshold to maintain party status in the House of Commons. Without party status, the NDP is not afforded critical research and support services by Parliament that previously sustained its caucus, research, and communications capacities. At this historic juncture, it remains

uncertain and unclear how the NDP will continue to fare. However, what has remained certain for the NDP is its often found role as a left-wing pivot, holding the balance of power in the House of Commons that can be wielded as it has been in the past for progressive policy concessions from the minority government in power.

Conclusion

The NDP continues to exist in a unique North American context as a social democratic political party, overshadowed by liberal associations of progressivism from the United States, while remaining the only progressive alternative in Western provinces. Though its national electoral prospects have never elevated it to leading the federal government, provincial administrations have had an out-sized political impact, and its legislative position during minority governments has enabled some social democratic institution building in Canada that would have otherwise fallen under a similar US trajectory. As a multiparty Westminster democracy, shaped by regionalism in a federal system, multicultural constituencies, and direct interconnections with the Canadian Labour Movement, the New Democratic Party continues to evolve, reject, and accept global trends for social democratic parties and projects. While some begin to write the federal NDP's obituary given the 2025 electoral results, its provincial strength does not necessarily lend to its death knell, and it is certainly not the first time that the federal party has had to return from near electoral oblivion. The general movement towards and from the Third Way has been both blessing and curse for the NDP, while helping to distinguish the itself from the Third Way afflicted Liberal Party at the federal level, provincial wings certainly felt its effects more acutely. The party will continue, internally and externally, to try to contest and reconcile left-wing progressive tendencies with its electoral endeavours.

The forthcoming federal leadership race is another test for the party, as "soul searching" and existential questions abound through the NDP's diminished state. Meanwhile, the mounting polycrisis and concurrent emergencies of climate change, inflation, and the incoming United States Trump Administration could present opportunities for the NDP to demonstrate a bold, progressive vision.The party could also fall into cynical political traps, caving to the pressures of an electorate that has lost hope in building a good society. While the recent experience of the supply and confidence agreement has brought about a number of progressive proposals, and previous experience of NDP efforts on Medicare and other social welfare programs, New Democrats must again demonstrate to a cynical electorate that their alternative progressive vision is real, credible, and will make life better than the Liberals' and Conservatives' visions for a renewed status quo.

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Biography

Dr. David McGrane is currently Professor of Political Studies at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan. He is an expert in Canadian social democracy, political theory, political marketing, elections, and voter behaviour. He has published almost 40 academic books, journal articles, and book chapters. His latest research is The New NDP: Moderation, Modernization, and Political Marketing(University of British Columbia Press, 2019), which won the Donald Smiley Prize awarded by the Canadian Political Science Association to the best book on Canadian government and politics. Dr. McGrane has been active in his community as a member of the City of Saskatoon's Environmental Advisory Committee, Member of the Board of Directors of the Saskatoon Open Door Society, Chair of the Political Action Committee of the Saskatoon & District Labour Council, and President of the Saskatchewan NDP. He is also a Policy Fellow of the Broadbent Institute as well as being the past president of the Prairie Political Science Association.

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Authors David McGrane and Clement Nocos demonstrate their craft by combining insightful analysis with the political story of how the NDP went from the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation to being a significant partner in modern minority governments. The NDP's story has unfolded within substantive challenges as regionalism has fractured political alliances and electorates have evolved. Resilience, principled politics, and progressive vision shaped the NDP over the past century. In a time of political turbulence—post-2025 federal election amid new Liberal leadership and a rapidly changing global context—can the NDP still be the progressive compass for Canada?

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ISBN: 978-2-39076-032-0