

A Climate for Change? Green Party Success in Guelph, Ontario

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Abstract

In the summer of 2018 Canadian history was made in Guelph Ontario when Mike Schreiner became the first ever Green MPP to be elected. Taking 45% of the vote, Schreiner's win marked the first time that four different parties were elected to the Ontario Legislature since 1951. Then, in the fall of 2019, Steve Dyk the Green MP for Guelph, came in second to Liberal MP Lloyd Longfield, in Canada's 43rd federal election. It is evident that voters in the riding of Guelph are experiencing a shift in political mindset. My research proposes to look into what factors have contributed to this shift and what the changes in ideology, identity, and values in Guelph have occurred to spark this political change and it will explore whether the changing political compass in Guelph is due to swing voting or to new alignments of partisanship with the Green party. Is this a one-time occurrence due to protest voting? Is Green party success sustainable in Guelph? Will this success lead to others across Ontario and Canada?

Drawing on more established Green Party literature from parliamentary systems in the EU and Australasia, this dissertation proposes seven themes of emergence and success for Green politics. These themes are post-materialism, permissible voting systems, a strong economy, party funding, populism, environmental or social movements, and party competition. Then, taking these themes, the federal and provincial Ontario Green Parties in Canada are examined to determine which of these themes are relevant to the Canadian case, with the results being mixed. As this is a case study of the 2018 Guelph election, to provide context and further explanation, the demographic and political history of both Ontario and Guelph are reviewed in detail and then compared to this project's seven themes. The results find that, with a few situational exceptions, the Green victory in Guelph followed its national and global counterparts in success.

Dedication

Barbara, Botje, Beppe
“Do wiest altyd myn Gezelligheid”

Acknowledgements

Despite the fact that you are about to read approximately 200 pages of them, I must admit that I am not one for words on paper. I struggle to articulate my feelings on a page, and much prefer to do so in conversation, preferably with good food and excellent cocktails. That being said, there are people who, without their support, this work may never have been finished, and they must be acknowledged.

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Introduction: Locating Green Politics

The years leading up to 2018 seemed to have contained an unprecedented number of worldwide events addressing climate change. The young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg was speaking at the UN and inspiring marches to advocate for climate action in over 150 countries, young people were participating in the “Fridays for Future” campaign in over 7,000 cities, and the “Rise for Climate” protests saw tens of thousands of people across the United States of America march in support of renewable energy transitions. Protests against pipelines were gaining public support and media attention across North America, and Tesla, a leading manufacturer of electric cars, “surpassed Ford Motor Company and General Motors in market capitalization, making it the most valuable American automaker” in 2017 (Isidore, 2017).

In Canada, the Liberal Party had won the 2015 federal election with a platform that included a national climate change plan and stressed that “climate change is an immediate and significant threat to our communities and our economy” (*Liberal Party of Canada 2015 Platform*, 2015). Even Ontario, a province built economically on resource extraction and manufacturing, saw environmental policy at the forefront of not just the Liberal Party’s platform, but all of the major party platforms. Then, in the provincial election of June 2018, the Ontario Green Party leader Mike Schreiner was elected in the riding of Guelph and it seemed perhaps that this was a turning point for climate anxieties to be expressed in political support. However, the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020 and subsequent lockdowns meant an abrupt halt to this momentum around climate change, as the world faced a more immediate threat to the health and safety of human beings. The existential threat of climate change remained, but it was one that seemed further away and thus less of a pressing political issue in that moment.

This project focuses on that moment in 2018 and asks the question of whether it was the climate momentum that affected Canada's political landscape, or if it was a culmination of other factors working together that led to the election of the first Green Party MPP in Ontario. The framework for this exploration is derived from the scholarly literature surrounding Green Party emergence and success in parliamentary systems in Europe and Australasia. Green parties have regularly found success by electing members and participating in government in these countries beginning in the early 1970's and therefore a considerable body of work has emerged addressing Green Party emergence and performance. From a summary of this research, the most agreed upon themes will be selected to provide a framework for comparison of Green Party success in Canada, Ontario, and Guelph.

Why a given political party is successful at a certain time and in a specific place is a perennial question in the study of politics. Political scientists have examined various aspects of electoral campaign successes and failures in attempts to answer this very question, with highly variable results. Studies of voter choice have been categorized into sociological models, psychological models, rational choice models, or mixtures of all three. Or political scientists have examined the rise of third parties in Canada, with theorists such as Macpherson (1953), Lipset (1954) and Pinard (1971) pointing to factors such as region, voter discontent, and the parliamentary system as a whole. More recently, international studies have uncovered themes that could explain voter behaviour specifically regarding Green Party formation and success (see Abou-Chadi and Kayser, 2017; Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos, 2014; Carter, 2013; Grant and Tilley, 2019). They have pointed to factors such as post-materialist values, the economy, voting systems, and party competition.

This project both builds on and departs from these previous studies in a number of ways and is unique in the field of political science for its focus specifically on Canadian Green Party politics. First, though there have been cross-European studies about the success of Green parties (see Grant and Tilley, 2019), none have specifically compared their findings to the Canadian situation. This project therefore adds to the comparative literature by bringing Canadian experience into the global examination of environmental politics. Second, the study focuses specifically on the Green Party in Canada, both federally and provincially, and thus addresses a gap in the extant literature and contributes to the body of international ecological political focus. Finally, though there is a large body of literature in Canadian politics surrounding third parties, these studies focus almost exclusively on other provinces, like Macpherson, Lipset, and Pinard with the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), the Alberta Social Credit Party (Social Credit), and Ralliement des créditistes in Quebec, or on other parties, like the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the New Democratic Party (NDP) in western Canada, or the Bloc Québécois in Quebec. Thus, this study will update and build upon this literature by adding a very necessary study of the contemporary political landscape.

To take up this research challenge, this project will utilize an interdisciplinary set of analyses, combining insights from case study and comparative research on the factors contributing to the rise of environmental politics and Green party success with attention to the temporal order of events and interaction with institutions in Guelph and Ontario drawn from historical institutionalism. These findings will then be brought into dialogue with the perceptions of the actors involved in the Green party campaign in Guelph in 2018 via the use of qualitative interview techniques, contributing to a new and comprehensive approach of grappling this sort of ‘when’ and ‘why’ question (i.e. why did the Green party make this breakthrough in this place at

this time). In doing so, this project will provide a case study framework for explaining how a small Green Party might find success in Canadian politics.

Sketching the Research Project: Research Design and Methods

My study begins with a broad examination of global Green Party politics and then steadily narrows the focus down to the Canadian Green Party's federal and then provincial successes and history, which sets the stage for an examination of the provincial Green party win in Guelph, Ontario in 2018. By using this case study approach, I seek to answer questions about the Green Party of Ontario's success in Guelph. Is the changing political compass in Guelph due to swing voting or to new alignments or dealignments of partisanship? Was this a one-time or one-place occurrence due to protest voting? Is Green Party success sustainable in Guelph? Will this success lead to others across Ontario and Canada? And, most importantly, why Guelph? In a political system where third and new-party success is incredibly hard to obtain, what was it about Guelph that made such a thing possible?

The specific research design of this project is as follows: in the introduction, a discussion of the importance of this study is given, along with a short summary of voter choice and third-party literature, and the categories and themes of Green party emergence and success are introduced. Then, this project dives more deeply into these topics. Before exploring the research surrounding Green parties abroad, a literature review on voter choice and third parties in democratic electoral systems in Canada and Europe is conducted. This review serves to locate Green parties within this literature and explores reasons why other scholars have argued that third parties form and find success. Though this literature review provides some answers to the

question of the success of the Green party in Guelph, it does not seek to answer several other important factors that were observed to influence the 2018 provincial election results.

Therefore, this project moves to comparative analysis of the emergence of Green parties in Europe and Australasia, using a defined set of parameters derived from this literature review that are relevant to the success of Green Parties. Globally, I look at examples from parliamentary systems in Europe and Australasia where Green Parties regularly obtain votes, gain representation, and sometimes help form government. My exclusive focus on these parliamentary systems is due to the fact that this study considers Canada, a parliamentary system, and this makes previous literature comparable.

From this EU and Australasia analysis seven themes of emergence and success arise, which are sorted into three distinct categories. They are as follows:

- Category 1: Social
 - The fact that in these countries, citizens, having largely satisfied their basic economic and physical needs, and prioritize values like self-expression, environmental protection, and quality of life over material concerns such as economic growth and physical security (Post-materialism)
 - The salience of post-materialist political discourses and movements, including environmentalism (Social and environmental movements)
 - The rise of populist movements and Green party parallels and divergences from these movements and Green party success despite them (Populism)
- Category 2: Economic
 - Relative economic stability and societal prosperity (a strong economy)
 - Some iteration of guaranteed party funding from the government (party funding)

- Category 3: Institutional
 - A supportive voting system that includes a form of proportional representation (voting systems)
 - The response of other parties to environmental and ecological issues which affects Green party support (party competition)

Next, narrowing the research akin to a funnel, this project takes these categories and themes and applies them to the Green Party of Canada (GPC). First the formation of the GPC, their mission, values and their political history is reviewed, and then this project explores which themes from Europe and Australasia are relevant to the Canadian federal case. This study discovers that the themes of post-materialism, as strong economy, party funding, voting systems and populism all affect the Canadian Green party in similar ways to their Green counterparts abroad. Deviating from global Green parties, this analysis finds that the GPC was not so directly influenced by social and environmental movements.

The research surrounding the Canadian federal Green Party also adds three themes to the categories of Social and Institutional factors.

- Social:
 - The importance of party leaders
 - The importance party leader performance in political debates
- Institutional:
 - Problems that arise from internal party competition

The project then narrows once again to look at Ontario and this history of the provincial Green party. First, a detailed analysis of the economic and political history of the province of Ontario is provided for context for the success and history of the Green Party of Ontario (GPO).

Then, the previous themes are once again reviewed to see which are relevant to the provincial case. Here again, very similar to its federal counterpart, the themes of post-materialism, a strong economy, voting systems and party funding are seen as strong predictors of success. Also, similarly to the GPC, the theme of formation and support from social and environmental movements is not significant. And though the theme of party competition under the category of Institutional factors is present for Ontario, it actually is more similar to its global counterparts than its federal iterations.

When reviewing the categories of Green party emergence and success, the specifics of the Ontario Green party add another theme:

- Economic:
 - The prevalence of neo-liberal discourses and movements (although this is more as a challenge to than a supportive factor).

These political and historical contexts set the stage for the focus of my research: Guelph, Ontario. Here a case study on the specific conditions and circumstances in Guelph, Ontario is conducted. Using a mixed-method approach combining an analysis of electoral and historical developments, political opportunity structures, and interviews with relevant political actors, this part of the project conducts an in-depth examination of the ethnographic, political, and geographical history of Guelph. This involves a socio-economic profile of the community, a discussion of its political history and voting patterns and a comparison to surrounding cities of similar size and demographic makeup. This literature is supplemented with qualitative interview data, obtained from Green party members, volunteers and leaders who worked on the 2018 campaign and who were there at that time. All of this data is used to analyse the themes in the

three categories that have arisen in this project so far and to discuss which are factors and which are not in this case study.

The city of Guelph and the circumstances surrounding the 2018 provincial election uncover similarities, deviances and additions to the themes in this analysis so far. In terms of similarities, Guelph is a solidly post-materialist city, it had a strong economy in 2018, and in addition to some guaranteed government funding, the GPO was incredibly well funded for the 2018 campaign with private donations. The Guelph Greens also grappled with the system of voting, similarly to the GPC, and they seemed to have found success despite the forces of neo-liberalism and populism. Once again, a specific social or environmental movement was not found to be relevant to their success. The GPO win in Guelph also followed the provincial themes of the importance of the party leader and their performance in campaign debates.

The Guelph analysis deviated in the theme of party competition as at no point was there internal party struggle, nor was there seemingly any attempt by the other parties in Guelph to co-opt Green party issues for votes. In terms of additions, the case study specifics of Guelph did uncover some unique themes to both the city and the circumstance. Ascertained from both demographic data and the qualitative interviews, two themes were added under the category of Institutional:

- Political Opportunity Structure/Lack of incumbent, and
- Provincial and Federal party politics

And several new themes were raised in interviews. These were luck, polling data, the strength of the candidate's campaign and there being something special about Guelph.

Interestingly for a Green party, when questioned, the theme of the climate crisis was not a strong

theme, with several interviewees stating that discussion of it was avoided altogether.

Categorizing these new themes, they would fall under:

- Social
 - Luck
 - Campaign
 - Something special about Guelph
 - Discussion of the climate crisis
- Institutional
 - Polling data

All of this leads to specific observations about the Guelph case, and its larger implications for Green Parties and other third parties in Canada and elsewhere.

Why Study a Green Party Victory?

This research merits attention as it adds to the literature surrounding the study of third-party¹ formation and success both in Canada and abroad. As Bélanger (2011) notes, “the variability and durability of third parties have become traditional characteristics of Canada party politics [and] this is especially intriguing given the fact that Canada offers an institutional environment that is usually hostile to the emergence of third parties because of the first-past-the-post electoral system” (Bélanger, 2011, p. 83). This project defines third parties in a manner akin to that of Bélanger and Nadeau (2010), who in turn borrow from Pinard, suggesting that: “[a

¹ There is disagreement within the literature as to whether Green parties are truly third parties due to their location in the margins of politics in many countries. Some scholars refer to them instead as “fourth” or even “fifth” parties (Walchuk, 2012), “other parties” (Bélanger and Nadeau, 2004), “non-pentad” parties (Russow 2000) or even “radical” parties (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006). This discussion is beyond the scope of this project, and therefore here Green parties will stay under the label of third parties.

third party is] any non-traditional party which has not yet been in power. It thus remains in the eyes of voters as an untried alternative” (Pinard, 1973, p. 455).

This research also adds to the scholarship surrounding voter choice and, more specifically, asks the question whether voter choice in Ontario is shifting. Since the surprising success of the NDP in coming to power provincially in 1990 Ontario has clearly demonstrated an ability to move beyond just cycling between the Liberal and Conservative parties and the province has long supported a three-party system, suggesting there is an opening and potential for new political parties. As Ontario is widely (and sometimes controversially) regarded as the economic and political centre of Canada, political change in this province has the potential to forecast the beginning of change across the country. Additionally, as noted by Anderson and Stephenson (2010), “much of the current understanding of voting behaviour in Canada has its roots in investigations into American elections” and so it is important to add to the current Canadian political literature as a whole in order to understand the specifics of Canadian voting behaviour (2010, p. 2).

This research is also important as, with the rising global concern for climate change, it asks the question of whether environmental concerns from voters can be linked to tangible political representation and party success. This examination will explore how environmental awareness and activism may be starting to affect political decisions locally as well as globally. A case study of the Green Party victory in Guelph may uncover the influence of specifically local factors. For example, it may help us understand how cities that lean in a post-materialist direction with high levels of education and household income, as well as those situated in agriculturally and geologically crucial environments, may be more open to voting Green. It may

also create a framework for potential political change, highlighting factors that, if replicated, could lead to Green Party representation elsewhere.

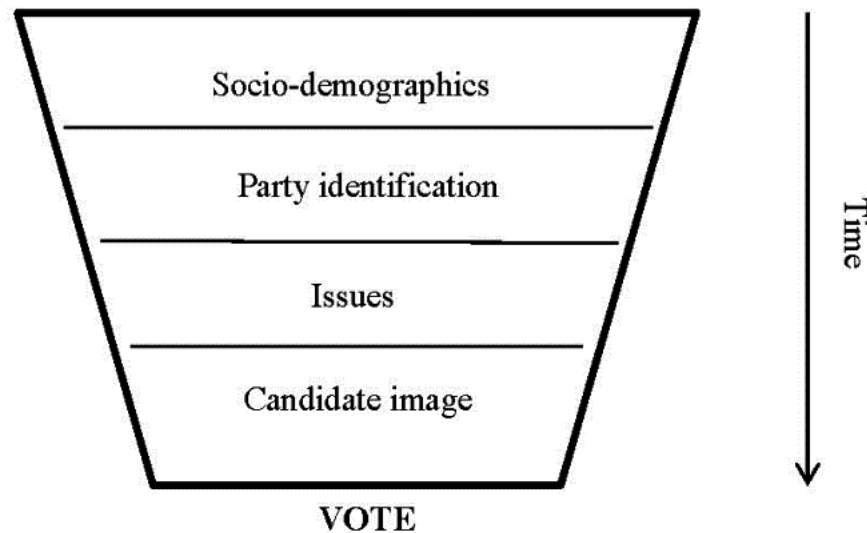
What's Been Done: A Review of Voter Choice Literature

The study of voter choice has generated a considerable academic literature, starting in the 1940s with theories attempting to answer the questions about why voters vote the way they do, and this body of research has taken many different approaches. Studying voter choice has been seen as critical in political science because, as Anderson & Stephenson (2010) note, “the act of choosing representative through regular elections is fundamental to the exercise of legitimate democratic authority” (1). The four most common and agreed-upon theories used in these studies are the sociological model, the social-psychological model, the multistage or bloc-recursive model, and the rational choice model. The sociological model was developed in 1944 by Paul Lazarsfeld and colleagues at Columbia University and posited that voters were most influenced in their vote by social background characteristics, such as religion, socio-economic status, and type of community, and that, essentially, “a person thinks, politically, as he [sic] is socially” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1967:27). However, this theory was criticized for being too static and having weak predictive accuracy and, most interestingly since this was a theory meant to explain political behaviour, the approach was criticized for leaving “little room for politics” with neither campaign issues nor candidates figuring very prominently in this model (Gidengil et al., 2012:6).

The next theoretical model directly addressed the shortcomings of the sociological approach and challenged it on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Developed by Campbell and colleagues in 1960 at the University of Michigan, the social-psychological model was tied

directly to politics, arguing that the forces of party identification, candidate evaluations, and issue attitudes were paramount to voter choice. To predict voter choice, Campbell et al. developed a “funnel of causality” (See fig. 1).

Figure 1.



The authors posited that the funnel of causality can be used to understand the factors that influence a voter’s choice. At the top of the funnel is the broadest range of factors that may influence a voter’s decision, including demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity), political ideology, issue positions, economic conditions, social values, and media exposure. Moving down the funnel, Campbell et al. identified more specific factors that are directly related to a voter’s choice. These might include factors like the candidate’s policy proposals, their personal characteristics (e.g., perceived honesty, leadership skills), the voter’s assessment of a candidate’s competence, and their perception of a candidate’s ability to represent their interests.

At the bottom of the funnel are the factors that are truly causal in determining a voter’s choice. These might include factors like the voter’s party affiliation, their loyalty to a particular political leader, and their overall level of political engagement and interest in the election. It is

worth noting that the factors in a funnel can vary depending on the context and the specific election in question. For example, in some elections, the top of the funnel may be dominated by a particular issue or set of issues, while in others, the identity of the candidates themselves may be the most salient factor.

This approach also drew criticisms from researchers at the University of Michigan such as Campbell et al. that questioned whether this model was “prediction without understanding,” and if the proposed “causal arrows run in the direction that the funnel of causality assumes” (Gidengil et al., 2012:7). Despite being formulated as a critique of the Columbia model, the two share some common ground—they both “assume that voters have a predisposition towards a particular party and the likelihood of defections from that party is inversely related to the strength of that partisan predisposition,” but differ in identifying what lies behind that predisposition (Gidengil et al., 2012:8). Given this overlap, it is not surprising that the next theory was proposed by theorists who “arrived at the judgment that a combination of the two is more powerful than the two taking separately page” (Gidengil et al., 2012:8).

This third hybrid approach, developed by Miller and Shanks in 1996, was a combination of the sociological and social-psychological approaches and was named the multistage or bloc-recursive model. This approach kept the funnel of causality from Campbell et al., but added a much more “differentiated set of assumptions” from social backgrounds and underlying beliefs and values all the way to issue opinions and leader choice, organizing them into descending blocs that were ordered according to their presumed proximity to the vote (Miller and Shanks, 1996:10). Even with such an expanded focus, the bloc-recursive model drew criticism: Gidengil et al. (2012) point out that Anderson and Stephenson (2010) argue that the importance of bloc factors could be over or under-estimated, resulting in an incorrect ordering in the funnel, or that

persuasion effects could occur meaning that causal arrows could run both ways in the funnel.

Additionally, Miller and Shanks themselves admitted that it is doubtful that all voters go through such a logical multi-step chain of reasoning.

Perhaps this is why the rational choice approach, the final model of voter choice, pioneered by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) eschewed psychological considerations almost completely and instead “explicitly attempted to apply economic reasoning to the behavior of political parties and voters” (Gidengil et al., 2012:11). Downs’s core assumption was that “conscious rationality prevails” (p.4) which, in the context of voting behaviour, “implies that people will vote for the party they believe will provide them with the most benefits” (Gidengil et al., 2012:11). This meant that voters assessed incumbent parties on how they had done in office versus how the opposition might have behaved had they been in power when deciding on who to vote for. This final model sparked a vast literature on economic voting as well as underpinned spatial models of party competition, but it did not go without its share of criticism. The model was not the best empirical fit to explain voter choice in Canada as it was found that economic voting in Canada is weak, and Clarke et al. (2004 & 2009) argued that “Downs greatly underestimated the importance of non-rational consideration in people’s evaluations and perceptions of the political realm” (Gidengil et al., 2012:12).

My current project does not fit neatly into any of these four political science approaches. This is because these theories tell us that Green parties come from voters who hold politically “green” values and that new parties arise when new voters arise. However, these approaches fail to explain when a new political party will arise, as the creation or switch to these values is unexplained. They also do not explain why a Green Party may do well in one location but not another. Further, there are many cases where voters hold green or environmental values, but no

representatives arise to champion these values politically. This is a key concern, as these theories fail to explain why the case may be that social values may be present, but corresponding political representation is not immediate and, therefore, the idea that voters simply holding these values will lead to change is too simplistic. However, these theories are still important as they can explain part of the equation, but not the entirety of it, and so this brings us to historical institutionalism and its role in supporting the arguments of this project.

Historical institutionalism is another approach that may help illuminate the success of Green parties. This new institutionalist social science approach looks not merely at vote choice, but also at historical context and how social, political, economic behaviour and change are affected by timing, path dependence, and sequences that affect institutions. Developed in the early 1990s, this theory posits that political parties may gain power due to “the path dependencies that emerge from the adoption of various institutions” (Pilon, 2012:6). Thus we need to attend to the historical emergence and development of political ideas and movements and plot how they interact with the institutions that exist in any given place and time. The political world is not a blank canvas – new ideas emerge amidst an already populated range of options – and political institutions do not merely mirror political wants and demands, they sometimes have their own impact on what transpires.

The use of historical institutionalism will contribute to this study in the sense that it points towards institutions as the space where politics play out, and many researchers argue that institutions are very important (see Blyth et al., 2016; Mahoney, 2017), but it still does not tell us when Green parties will emerge. Even a combination of all the theories discussed thus far cannot do that. Instead of prediction, this project will categorize and examine all of the factors present when a Green Party emerges and is successful. To do this, a mixed-method approach will be

used that will draw from both existing behavioural research and institutional approaches, and further add to that testimony from those who directly participated in a successful Green Party campaign, themes from historical Green Party emergence and success (in Canada and internationally), and an in-depth look at the opportunity structure that was present at the time and place of victory: Guelph, Ontario in 2018.

To incorporate all of this in this approach, the project will temporally map out an opportunity structure for Guelph in 2018, beginning with demographics, which form the base of opportunity. Factors such as age, income, education and class background inform this study in illuminating the values held by voters in Guelph. However, as noted above, this does not guarantee representation, so next the institutions at play in Guelph will be examined. This includes detrimental factors, like a first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting structure, as well as advantageous ones, like political party funding. Finally, due to the fact that Green parties can succeed or fail despite or due to these factors, interviews with key participants in the Guelph 2018 campaign will add to this study, which may fill in the gaps to explain the Green Party victory at that time and place.

With a combined approach to studying the Guelph Green Party success, it is hoped that this research will be able to answer the question “why Guelph, why 2018?” Though some might hope that a concrete answer with predictive qualities would be a nice outcome of this study, there is every chance that the answer to this core question may be that the result was simply random. The Green Party win in Guelph may very well turn out to have been a political fluke. However, this result is still a result, and is interesting. Even if this project fails to explain the situation entirely (though a complete non-answer seems unlikely), this research can identify a multitude of

factors that contribute to an understanding of party success, which can then be applied elsewhere to test their predictive quality.

What's Been Done: A Review of Green Party Literature

To explain Green Party electoral formation and success, this project highlights common themes agreed upon in the aforementioned literature and organizes those themes under the aforementioned theoretical explanations. Theories of voter choice or demand will encompass the themes of post-materialism, economy, populism, environmental and/or social protests, and leaders and debates; theories of favourable institutional arrangements or historical institutionalism will encompass funding and voting systems; and, finally, the theory of political opportunity structure will encompass the theme of party competition. Examining these themes provides a framework for the analysis of Green Party success that will be applied to a case study of Guelph in 2018 in later chapters.

This distillation of explanatory factors has not been done previously for the Green Party in the Canadian context. However, given that in Europe and Australasia “the Greens are the most enduring and cohesive new party family since the rise of the Social Democrats a century ago,” there have been a number of examinations of their success in those countries (Grant & Tilley, 2019:495). This comparative literature on Green parties remains sparse, however. Much more discussion is being lent to “niche” parties on the radical right (Arzheimer 2009; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Carter 2005; Golder 2003; Ignazi 2003; Jackman and Volpert 1996; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Lubbers et al. 2002; Mudde 2007; Norris 2005; Pardos-Prado 2015; VanderBruget et al. 2005) or radical left (Gomez et al. 2016; March 2011; March and Mudde 2005;

March and Rommerskirchen 2015; Ramiro 2016; Visseret al. 2014). Meanwhile, extensive and comparative explorations of Green parties internationally and domestically remain rare.

The scholars who do examine Green parties most frequently examine specific countries or specific elections, discussing predictors for Green Party success for those specific scenarios. This examination therefore incorporates this field in order to find common and agreed-upon themes between the disparate studies. The first of these, falling under voter choice theory, is the presence of post-materialism. One of the few large-scale comparative studies of Green parties conducted to date, a macro-scale European survey which examined Green Party support using a “dataset of 347 parliamentary elections from 32 countries over the course of 45 years to test competing theories,” done by Grant and Tilley in 2019, found strong support for a country’s post-materialist nature being a predictor of Green Party support. This was true for country-specific studies as well (Clements, 2012; Vasilopoulos & Demertzis, 2013; Carter, 2013; Beaudonnet et. al., 2013; Miragliotta, 2013).

In Canada, post-materialism was also found to be a major, recurring factor in predicting voters’ environmental concern, and this anxiety is “naturally linked to politics by the understanding that as citizen values change, so too do the demands of government” (Anderson and Stephenson, 2011:342). In an examination of the federal Green Party of Canada, Camcastle (2007) found this link to be even more clear, with research finding strong evidence of post-materialist values in both Green Party voters and members. Similarly in Ontario, with high levels of economic prosperity and education, the province’s post-materialist status is solidly set and observations about this theme are similar to those nationally and abroad (see, for example, Camcastle, 2007; Eckersley, 1989; Rüdiger et al., 1991; Vromen, 2005).

Scholars then cite the economy as the next major factor in voter choice affecting Green party success. Findings show that if the economy of a country is not strong, even with the presence of post-materialism, support for the resident Green Party will falter (Bürklin, 1985; Müller- Rommel, 1998; Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos, 2013; Kayser & Grafström, 2016; Abou-Chadi & Kayser, 2017; Grant & Tilley, 2019). This holds true in Canada, with examinations showing that politicians from major parties will only put forward and support environmental policies that are economically advantageous, and political parties in Ontario make sure that the economy takes precedence over the environment in almost all instances (Frizzell and Pammett, 1993; Clark, Kornberg, and Scotto, 2008; LeDuc and Pammett, 2008; Winfield, 2012).

A third factor that scholars argue affects voter choice is one that is relevant to the EU and Australasia but less so in Canada and Ontario: environmental issues and/or social protests. Researchers like Grant & Tilley (2019), Carter (2008), and Rootes (1995b) argue that in countries such as Germany, Finland, and Italy, social movements brought large groups of civically engaged and active groups together which facilitated the subsequent formation of Green parties. These concerns could be surrounding issues such as clean water, deforestation, forest fires, wildlife preservation, etc. However, given that most European Green parties saw their origin in the 1980's, it should come as no surprise that there was one overwhelmingly universal and measurable issue for their political emergence: opposition to nuclear power (Kreuzer, 1990; Davidson, 1996; Carroll et. al., 2009; Grant & Tilley, 2019). Scholars note that, given the phasing out of nuclear power, this might be problematic for ongoing Green Party support. However, recent studies of Green Party support show that an increase of concern surrounding climate change may replace or transition this support base as voters have expressed concern with

this environmental issue and will vote for a party that addresses this concern (Barry & Doherty, 2001; Rootes, 2008; Birch, 2009; Carter, 2010; Dolezal, 2010; Vasilopoulos & Demertzis, 2013).

Without such events or protests Green parties can still form, like those in Canada and Britain. However, in both these countries, Green parties faced with an already hostile FPTP electoral system comparatively struggled to gain electoral ground (Carter, 2008).

A final theme that fits under the theoretical framework of voter choice is one that is unique to Canada and Ontario —leaders and debates. Canadians rely heavily on debates when deciding how to vote, and multiple studies have found that Canadians pay a great deal of attention to leaders when deciding how to vote (Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008 & 2011; Leduc & Pammett, 2008; Clark et. al., 2011; Clarke & Stewart, 2019). This diverges from the European and Australasian literature in the importance of party leaders —it is not a theme that is consistently mentioned by those authors. However, multiple Canadian scholars find that debates contribute to a more informed electorate and, despite their limitations, they find that debates “constitute a perfect opportunity for voters to compare and contrast candidates’ positions and personal styles and become better informed about their vote choice” (Jamieson, 1988; Owen, 1991; Lanoue & Schrott, 1991; Turcotte, 2015: 255).

The next theoretical framework for examining Green Party success is historical institutionalism or institutional constraints. Falling under this are the themes of voting systems and party funding, both of which can be crucial in Green Party formation and continued success. A third theme that falls under this framework is neoliberalism, which is not unique generally, but is unique to the Green Party experience in Ontario. Starting with voting systems, scholars attribute the success of Green parties to some form of proportional representation, which has been shown to facilitate the development of new parties, allow expressive and instrumental

voters to show their support, and reduce the odds that a vote for a minor party is “wasted” (Rudiq, 2006; Grant & Tilley, 2019). This is because, by being directly proportional to the amount of votes a party receives, proportional representation does not penalize parties who have a decentralized voter base, with support spread throughout many different voting districts (Müller-Rommel 1998; Carter, 2008; Miragliotta, 2013). Proportional representation also lowers the barriers for entry to representation in parliamentary systems, which in turn has been found to increase a party’s credibility as a viable political party in the minds of the voters for future elections (Spoon, 2007).

Canada’s first-past-the-post voting system, similar to that of Britain, has been consistently cited as a major roadblock to the Green Party’s success, as they tend to have voter support, but that support is spread thinly throughout the country (Russow, 2000; Harada, 2004; 2006; 2008; Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008). This continues to be true for Ontario, where, like the federal system in Canada, the province has mostly used a single member plurality system since Confederation, and this has been identified as a major roadblock not just for the Green Party of Ontario (GPO) but for all new and small parties (Harada, 2004; 2006; 2008; Waddell, 2008; Everts & Harada, 2019). This means that, despite the GPO gaining up to 8% of the popular vote in past elections, this did not translate into any seats prior to 2018 (Winfield, 2012).

The second institutional factor that can make or break a Green Party is funding. In the EU and Australasia, all countries provide a certain amount of state funding for political parties, but the threshold at which a party can access this funding is key to small parties like the Greens gaining a foothold. Public subsidies that are allocated on vote share, like those in Germany, bolster the financial and organisational competence of emerging Green parties, whereas funding that relies on parliamentary representation, like that in Britain, when denied to small parties,

makes it much harder to break into the political scene (Rüdig, 1991; McCulloch, 1992; Burchell 2002; Carter, 2008; Birch, 2009).

In Canada, funding for small parties is just as important, and has gone through a tumultuous history that can be divided into three periods that had drastically different effects on the Green Party of Canada. In the years prior to 2004, corporations, unions, and individuals could make large monetary donations to political parties and their campaigns and parties who gained over 2 percent of the votes cast in an election were reimbursed for election expenses. This meant that large, well-established parties had the huge advantage of guaranteed funding that smaller parties did not enjoy. Then, changes in 2004 by Bill C-24 made it so that corporate donations were capped at one thousand dollars and, most pertinently, any political party receiving more than 2 percent of the national popular vote would receive \$1.75 CAD per vote. This combatted the issue of thin cross-country voter support for the GPO, as well as the idea that a Green vote was a wasted vote. However, in 2011, a majority Conservative government eliminated the per-vote subsidy, erasing this advantage for small and wide-spread Canadian parties.

The final institutional factor, unique to the political culture of Ontario, is the rise and continued presence of neoliberalism. This is not to say that Ontario is the only province affected by neoliberalism, nor is it to say that the Green Party of Ontario is the only political party affected by it, however, the combination of the two makes the effect on the Green Party of Ontario unique. This is due to Ontario's history of manufacturing: though the province once was the undisputed economic engine of Canada, in recent years, traditional manufacturing jobs such as auto and parts manufacturing, in Ontario have seen a dramatic decline, leading to a subsequent degradation of unions, work stability, and social provisioning, and the rise of privatization and an

emphasis on individuality. Though no authors have yet to connect this directly to the success or lack thereof of the GPO, given that the central tenets of neoliberalism contrast sharply with those of the GPO, the rise of neoliberalism does not bode well for the party.

A final lens of examination is political opportunity structure, and it is here that the theme of party competition comes into play. This is the process by which political parties compete for power and influence within a political system. It involves mobilizing supporters, articulating policy positions, and engaging in vigorous campaigning in order to win elections and achieve policy goals. This theme is present in the examination of European, Australasian, and Canadian Green Party literature, but in different ways. In Europe and Australasia, authors found that the degree to which mainstream party policies acknowledge or dismiss environmental issues could be a key factor that leads to the emergence and/or ongoing support of Green parties (Rootes, 1995b, Miragliotta, 2013; Otjes, Simon, and Krouwel, 2015; Carter, 2008). Some of these authors are once again Grant and Tilley (2019), who lay out three strategies of party competition—dismissive, adversarial, and accommodative—and find that in the short term, accommodative strategies by larger parties hurt the Greens, whereas long-term, after the first three elections that the Green Party participates in, accommodative strategies actually boost Green Party support.

This is shown to be true in multiple countries, such as Britain and the Netherlands, where established parties had robust environmental platforms, making it difficult for Green parties to gain a foothold. A key to success when facing party competition, therefore, may be a Green Party's ability to incorporate issues beyond just ecology. In countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, Finland, and Italy, Green Party platforms encompassed not only local environmental and nuclear issues, but also social justice and participatory democracy, so as to appeal to the

movements surrounding those issues as well (Kreuzer, 1990; Carter, 2008:230; Carroll et. al., 2009; Grant & Tilley, 2019).

In Canada, another layer of nuance is added to the political opportunity structure of party competition. Here, findings are similar to those abroad when it comes to opposing parties' strategies—if larger, established parties have good environmental platforms, the Green party struggles to gain a foothold (Harada, 2006, 2008; Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008; Biro, 2010; Anderson & Stephenson, 2011). However, with Canadian Green parties, infighting and disagreements within the Green party itself is a major reason for loss of Canadian voter support. This infighting, which Harada (2006) notes is a conflict between fundamentalists and realists over centralization, professionalism, and consensus, not only splinters the party, but creates increased negative media attention that then affects the credibility of the party and, consequently, their public support (Harada, 2006; 2008; 2011; Waddell, 2008).

In Ontario, records of party infighting are absent. Whether this is due to a lack of research on the GPO or just that the party is more compatible is unclear; however, as Mark Winfield points out in his book *Blue-Green Province* (2012), party competition with other parties is just as pertinent in provinces as country-wide. Up until the 1990's, Ontario voters who had high levels of concern for environmental issues were placated by comprehensive and highly-publicised environmental platforms from the Liberal, New Democratic, and even the PC governments, meaning that the GPO had no gap to fill.

A final theme to discuss is the rise and ongoing spread of populism. Though it is not cited as a factor in Green party emergence and success, its prevalence in global politics in the 21st century necessitates the question of where Green parties fit in the world of modern right-wing populism. Beginning in the end of the nineteenth century in Russia and The United States,

spreading to Latin America in the 1930's and finally reaching Western Europe in the end of the last century, populism has become a powerful political force in North America and Europe. Though populism can be difficult to define, this project relies on one of its most ardent scholars, Cas Mudd, to explain it. Mudd (2012) defines populism as “a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (9). This “thin-centered ideology” means that populism doesn't offer a complete worldview like socialism or liberalism; instead, it attaches itself to other ideologies (e.g., nationalism, socialism, authoritarianism). Again, for the purpose of this project, populism is distilled down to three main tenets: a framing of the *people vs. the elite* which argues that populism relies on a fundamental antagonism — the “good” ordinary people are pitted against a “bad” or “corrupt” elite; an *anti-establishment rhetoric* which says that populists often position themselves against political, economic, cultural, or media elites, claiming to restore power to the people; and, the idea of *majoritarianism & the general will* where populists claim to represent the “true” or “silent” majority and often de-legitimize dissent or pluralism by framing opponents as enemies of the people.

Though populism is a powerful force, for this project, it does not seem to be a factor in the emergence and success of Green parties specifically. Though there is overlap between the Green and populist movement – both challenge the status quo structures (such as neoliberalism and corporate interests) and both claim to represent the will of the people against dominant institutions – there are more divergences. Green politics are inclusive and pluralist, while populism often invokes exclusionary binaries. Green ideologies rely on scientific consensus (e.g., climate change), while some populist movements are anti-expert or climate-skeptical.

Populism can be volatile and ideology-light, whereas Green politics are typically ideology-rich and values-driven (Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023; Webber, 2023).

Those studying Green parties and those studying populism also do not tend to overlap. Indeed, *Political Populism* by Heinisch, Holtz-Bacha and Mazzoleni (2021) which purports to be a comprehensive handbook addressing populism, does not contain a chapter on Green parties, and by its absence we can draw conclusions of distance. Similarly, though there are some articles emerging that address the populistisation of green politics, the vast majority of these are recent, 2020's and later (see Lubarda, 2020; Böhmelt, 2021; Audikana and Kaufmann, 2022; Fu, 2025), meaning that though this is an important political turn, it is a recent one, and an extended review of this collaboration would be beyond the scope of this project. Despite this, as each stage of this work is discussed, we will review the tenets of populism to ascertain to what extent, if any, populism had affected the emergence and success of Green parties.

Third party research in Canada

Though there is a dearth of literature surrounding the study of the Green Party in Canada specifically, the same cannot be said for literature examining third parties generally. As mentioned previously, the question of how third parties form and gain support in Canada's parliamentary system is one that political scientists have researched in depth, with various hypotheses, critiques, and themes emerging from each study conducted. Beginning in 1953, C.B Macpherson examined the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), who formed provincial government in Alberta from 1921 to 1935, and The Alberta Social Credit Party (Social Credit), which formed a majority provincial government in 1935. Macpherson argued that these party formations could be attributed to regional characteristics—Alberta experienced a feeling of alienation because it

was treated as a simple peripheral economic region due to the “quasi-colonial relationship” that it had with Canada’s eastern region at the time, and the class homogeneity in the area made it so that the farmers involved had similar goals (Bélanger, 2007 pg. 93).

Macpherson’s theory was then critiqued by Lipset (1954), who argued that the success of these third parties in Western Canada had little to do with social conditions or structures, but instead were due to two institutional factors: the parliamentary system and the electoral system in Canada. The Canadian parliamentary system, Lipset (1954) argued, had inherited a strict party discipline approach from Britain, meaning that any members that disagreed with party policy would have to leave and create their own party to see their ideas incorporated. Second, Lipset (1954) argued that the first-past-the-post parliamentary system actually helped emerging local or regional parties, as concentrated votes easily win a riding.

Then Maurice Pinard in 1971 argued that third parties may experience a significant boost of support at election time for two reasons. First, Pinard (1971) looked to voters, noting that if those voters going to the polls had significant grievances with larger parties around election time, they could air these grievances by forming or supporting a third party. Second, Pinard looked at opportunity structure, identifying a factor he termed “one-party dominance” (pg. 22), where again segments of the population which are unsatisfied or angry with the ruling party, but, crucially, at the time of election the traditional opposition party is electorally weak, and so voters do not “consider this traditional ‘second’ party as a viable option and they will be more tempted (or predisposed) to turn towards a third party as a way to express their grievances” (Bélanger, 2007: 94).

Finally in 1973, Blais, in line with other scholars of the day, argued that traditional party attachments were weakening, and this dealignment among the Canadian electorate was the

reason for third-party success (Blais, as cited in Belanger, 2007). This unstable party identification was also noted by other political scientists and contributed to the well-documented rise of brokerage politics and parties in Canada (Clark et. Al. 1991; Bélanger & Stephenson, 2010). Therefore, scholars argued, voters were more likely to swing from party to party and vote based on valence issues such as healthcare, economy, etc. If third parties were able to capitalize on such issues and convince the Canadian public that they were best suited to address them, traditional party loyalty would no longer stop the electorate from giving their votes to that party.

Other arguments proposed to explain the rise of third parties are post-materialism and the changing values of Canadian society (Nevitt, Bakvis, and Gibbins, 1989; Inglehart, 1998), the importance of mobilization strategies used by such parties (Bell, 1993), and the presence of a charismatic leader at the head of these parties (Gagnon, 1981). Finally, examining the increase in support for third parties in recent years, several scholars point to the rise of discontent with traditional parties and politics in Canada (Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Dalton 2004).

Macpherson's theory of class homogeneity can apply to Green voters, as they tend to be to be affluent (Brown et al., 2010; Harada, 2011) and they are more likely to be young and living in cities (Beaudonnet & Vasilopoulos, 2014; Brown et al., 2010; Camcastle, 2007). However, Green parties do not adhere to Macpherson's third-party theory of regionalism, as they tend to be very geographically spread out—so much so that this is cited as one of their main stumbling blocks in Canada's first-past-the-post system.

Lipset's critique also only partially explains Green Party success in Canada as his theory, like Macpherson's, fall short in its championing of the first-past-the-post system supporting third parties. However, his explanation of new parties forming due to discontent within existing parties may apply, although looking at the history of both the GPC and the GPO, this does not

seem to be the case. For Pinard, Green parties could perhaps see a swell of support around elections a protest against mainstream parties. However, this explanation does not appear to apply to Green Party candidates who not only won provincial seats but continue to do so in places like British Columbia. Still, Pinard's focus on political opportunity structure does offer an interesting research strategy that could be applied in ways that depart from his more restrictive assumptions.

Though these scholars and their theories may be able to explain the rise of third-party support in certain regions or at certain times, they fall short in providing a comprehensive explanation that we could apply, off the shelf, to explain the recent Green Party victory in Ontario.

What Will Be Done Differently Here: The Framework

This project both builds on and departs from the extant studies in a number of ways and is unique in the field of political science for its address of specifically Canadian Green Party politics. First, though cross-European studies about the success of Green parties have been done (see Grant and Tilley, 2019), none have been done to specifically compare to the Canadian situation. This project therefore adds to comparative literature surrounding Canadian and global politics. Second, the study focuses specifically on the Green Party in Canada and thus addresses a gap in the extant literature and contributes to the body of international ecological political focus. Finally, though there is a large body of literature in Canadian politics surrounding third parties, these studies focus almost exclusively on the CCF, the NDP, or the Bloc Quebecois, meaning that this study updates and builds upon this literature by adding a very necessary study of the contemporary political landscape.

Methodologically, this study departs from a considerable body of work on political parties and even Green politics in its focus on developing a deep explanatory account of the victory of the Green party of Ontario in Guelph in 2018. This focus on explanation rather than predictive capacity pushes our study to examine the details of context at a variety of scales: comparative, national, provincial, and local. Such an approach is appropriate in cases where a single outcome is being explored. While limited as a means of generating explanations across a broader body of election outcomes such a deep dive into the context of a locality, especially when it is informed by broader comparative insights, can contribute to generating more systematic insights as one part of a broader collective research effort on a topic like Green politics (for further elaboration of the value and challenges of single event explanations, see Felzer, 1975, Howard and Walters, 2014, and Torigian, 2021).

The Plan of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters, including this introduction and a conclusion. Chapter 2 begins with the summation of work that has come before: a review of the literature on third parties in Canada and the theories political scientists have attributed to the creation and success of these third parties.

Chapter 3 then turns to Green parties in the Europe and Australasia, then Canada, then Ontario. The first part of the chapter will summarize the academic debates surrounding Green parties in Europe and Australasia parliamentary systems to create of a framework of themes to use for comparison in Canada and Ontario in the second part of the chapter.

Chapter 4 investigates Guelph, Ontario, tracing its roots in history in southern Ontario, and summarizing its political, economic, and educational history until 2018. This is meant to provide

context for the 2018 socio-economic situation of 2018, as well as highlight patterns and themes, if any, in the city that are similar to those found in chapter 2.

Chapter 5 then looks at the specific socio-economic, political, and social framework in Guelph in 2018. It is here that first-hand interview accounts from Guelph Green Party volunteers, employees, and candidates are added to provide context and first-hand accounts of the city at that time. It then takes up the discussion of the question: Why Guelph? This chapter combines the hypotheses, demographic information, interview data, and prior themes of Green Party to success in an attempt to answer this question.

Chapter 6 concludes by drawing together the insights gathered from the explorations of different sources as well as suggesting directions for further research on these topics.

Chapter 2: Canadian Third-Party Theories

Though there has yet to be an all-encompassing academic review of the formation and success of the Green Party in Canada, that does not mean that other third parties have been ignored. Indeed, within the field of political science, a long-standing discussion has surrounded the formation and success of parties like the Social Credit Party, the Bloc Quebecois and The Reform Party. The most prominent start to the discussion was with C.B. Macpherson in 1953 with his examination of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), who formed government in Alberta from 1921 to 1935, and then The Alberta Social Credit party (Social Credit) which formed a majority government in 1935.

Looking at the success of these parties, Macpherson proposed that there were two favourable conditions that lead to the rise of a third party. The first was region specific – Macpherson argued that the quasi-colonial relationship that Alberta had with central Canada at the time resulted in Alberta being treated as a simple peripheral economic region and therefore led to feelings of alienation in this region. Though UFA and Social Credit were similar to the existing federal Conservative party, their members viewed that party as “as political instruments of power controlled by Ontario and Quebec's manufacturing and financial elites” (Belanger, 2007:93). Macpherson's second proposal was that of class homogeneity. The group of Alberta farmers that started the protests and gave support to the UFA and then Social Credit all came from similar locales and socio-economic backgrounds, predisposing them, Macpherson argued, to supporting a similar party.

As new political theories tend to do, Macpherson's drew criticism from the political science community. Most notable of the critics was Lipset (1954) who argued that the success of these third parties in Western Canada had less to do with social conditions or structures than two

institutional factors: the parliamentary system and the electoral system in Canada. First, Lipset (1954) suggested that due to the “party discipline inherited from British parliamentarism” any party member who disagrees or is not willing to toe the party line must leave the party and “join (or create) a different party movement” (Belanger, 2007:93). Second, Lipset argued that local or regional parties like UFA and Social Credit are more likely to find success with the Canadian first-past-the-post electoral system due to their locally concentrated numbers that this system rewards. Belanger (2007) notes that these two factors raised by Lipset provide a “compelling explanation as to why third parties have had more electoral success in Canada than in the United States” (94).

The next debate surrounding third-party success in Canada occurred in 1971 with Maurice Pinard’s work which examined two reasons why a third party may experience a significant boost of support at election time, leading to their success. First, Pinard (1971) theorized that if there existed significant grievances within some segments of the electorate around election time that were not addressed by existing parties, then voters might air these grievances by forming or supporting a third party. Second, Pinard identified a factor which he termed “one-party dominance” (Pinard, 1975, p. 22). Here there are again segments of the population which are unsatisfied or angry with the ruling party, but, crucially, at the time of election the traditional opposition party is electorally weak, and so voters do not “consider this traditional ‘second’ party as a viable option and they will be more tempted (or predisposed) to turn towards a third party as a way to express their grievances” (Belanger, 2007: 94).

Pinard’s work also drew critique within the literature, most notably by Blaise (1973) who argued that “third party success was due instead to the weakness of traditional party attachments, a view similar to that of Clark and Kornberg (1996), who suggests that third party

support is mostly due to unstable party identification (i.e. partisan “dealignment”) among the Canadian electorate” (Belanger, 2007:95). Pinard responded to these critiques in 1973 by reformulating his one-party dominance theory into “a more general condition of structural conduciveness, that of the political nonrepresentation of social groups through the party system” (Pinard 1973: 442).

Pinard went further in his response to this critique by proposing to distinguish between two types of third parties. The first of these are protest parties who form out of dissatisfaction with both the ruling party and the traditional opposition party at the time, an example being the Social Credit party. Second are radical parties, like the farmers and labour movements or the Parti Quebecois, that “propose an articulated ideology that integrates class or communal consciousness and values” (Belanger, 2007:95). Tying this to his one-party dominance theory, Pinard argued that protest parties are the only type of party that rise to prominence in his previously articulated conditions.

Aside from these two major debates in the literature, there have been other theories raised to explain the rise of third parties in Canada. One of these is a theoretical approach which attributes success (or lack thereof) of minor parties to the varying political cultures found across the country. For example, studies by Simeon and Elkins (1974), Brym (1979), Clark et al. (1979), and Gidengil (1990) suggest that non-traditional parties struggle for support and mobilization from citizens in the Atlantic provinces due to their inhabitants being characterized as “traditionalists and as inefficacious people” (Belanger 2007: 96). However, Belanger (2007) argues that this explanation remains unsatisfying “mainly because this rather naive picture of Atlantic political culture as markedly displaying political inefficacy appears to be mostly outdated” (Tanguay & Gagnon, 2011, p. 96).

Other arguments proposed to explain the rise of third parties are post-materialism and the changing values of Canadian society (Nevitt, Bakvis, and Gibbins, 1989; Inglehart, 1998), the importance of mobilization strategies used by such parties (Bell, 1993), and the presence of a charismatic leader at the head of these parties (Gagnon, 1981). Finally, examining the increase in support for third parties in recent years, several scholars point to the rise of discontent with traditional parties and politics in Canada (Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Dalton 2004). Support for third parties, other authors argue, may be serving a very specific function in response to this increase in political discontent. Voters unhappy with major parties' platforms and performance may vote for a smaller party as a way of forcing major parties to adapt their positions (Harmel and Svasand, 1997; Meguid, 2005). Therefore, this support of third parties may never be strong enough to elect them into legislature or government, but it changes Canadian politics nonetheless (Hirschman, 1970; Kang, 2004) as traditional parties are forced to readjust their legislative agendas to regain the voters lost (Mallory, 1954; Hesseltine, 1962; Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus, 1996).

Taking insights from this previous work it has become evident that the success or failure of Green parties should be seen as something of an exceptional case as that will require something more to grasp their emergence and popularity. This is so because, despite the depth and breadth of this previous work, large portions of these arguments do not apply to Green parties. However, there are several theorizations that do. Thus our first step is to sort which do and do not. The first of these is Macpherson's argument for class homogeneity among third party voters. Green voters do tend to have not only class characteristics in common, as they tend to be affluent (Brown et al., 2010; Harada, 2011), but their homogeneity extends also to the fact that Green voters are more likely to be young and living in cities (Beaudonnet & Vasilopoulos, 2014;

Brown et al., 2010; Camcastle, 2007). This also lends to another similarity with previous third-party research that contends that third party voters and Green voters are post-materialistic.

However, despite the similarity to Macpherson's explanation of homogeneity, Green parties do not adhere to his third-party theory of regionalism. Green voters do not tend to congregate, and, in fact, one of the main stumbling blocks they encounter in Canada's first-past-the-post political system is that they are so geographically spread out. Green party support has historically been found on the exact opposite sides of the country – with representatives being elected from British Columbia to Prince Edward Island. This geographic diffusion continues with the rise of Green support now in Ontario as well.

The reasons for the success of the GPC Canada-wide also differs from those factors driving Lipset's institutional critique of Macpherson. Recall that Lipset attributes third-party success in Canada to their regional or local popularity, which increases their success in the first-past-the-post electoral system (see also Cairns 1968; Gerring 2005). It is evident that the first-past-the-post electoral systems are a major stumbling block for third parties that do not have a strong geographically-situated supporter base. Not a complete block, however, as the GPC has been successful in recent years despite this. Therefore, while Lipset's critique holds true for some third parties evidently there are other factors in play that must affect the rise of other third parties.

Where Green parties also adhere to Lipset's critiques is in his crediting Canada's inheritance of a British parliamentary system in influencing the formation of new parties. The traditional parties in Canada follow the same stringent control measures as British parties, and it does appear that those Canadians who have wanted more environmental focus from parties were forced to break off and support a new one if this desire was enough for them to step over the

party line. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the GPC has deviated from these control measures, as the GPC has never “whipped” their members (Green Party of Canada, 2019).

The governance of a charismatic leader, such as Aberhart with the Social Credit Party in Alberta, or Caouette in Quebec, has been helpful for minor parties to overcome the structural and institutional barriers facing them (Macpherson, 1953, Gagnon, 1981, Belanger, 2007). However, the GPC’s inception was not heralded by such a leader but instead it was a coming together of several already created parties that had similar ideologies (Culbert, 1996). Though the GPC’s success in recent years could be attributed to their then leader Elizabeth May, as she was competent, popular, seen as trustworthy and performed well in national debates, May did not create a following of voters dedicated just to her. Like the GPC, May was always very programmatic, and worked hard to keep focus on the party’s policies and vision, not her personal one (Dornan, 2009; Waddell, 2009).

The final rationalizations for third party success made by Macpherson do not apply to the Green party trajectory in Canada. There was no religious angle to the rise of the Green party and, because they are not an offshoot of any traditional party, it does not appear that they stemmed from a feeling of alienation from any one party in Ottawa. Additionally, their rise in various places across the country undermines the theory that they may have formed due to any sort of quasi-colonial relationship at the time.

Turning to Pinard, his arguments for the support of third parties may apply to Green voters as the support of Green parties at election time can be seen as a protest vote, and that the formation of Green parties can be due to dissatisfaction with the traditional parties. This certainly could be the case in recent years with voters unhappy with traditional parties’ policy (or lack thereof) reflecting the climate crisis. However, Pinard’s protest vote explanation does not apply

to Green Party candidates, like several in British Columbia, who not only won office, but continued to hold it once voted in.

As for more recent theories, there is evidence that mobilization strategies are important to Green party success (Bell, 1994). In districts where the GPC has a well-organized group of dedicated supporters, even if this is not a very large group, they appear to have found success, and, alternatively, where when there is confusion and organizational failures, the party performs much weaker. This is evident in the mired GPC campaigns in the past that struggled with internal party competition (Harada, 2006, 2009).

Canadian Green party success further disproves the theory of varying political cultures. Characterizing the inhabitants of the Atlantic provinces, for example, as traditionalists and arguing that this makes it difficult to mobilize around new parties does not explain the recent success of Green parties' candidates in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick². These recent achievements further solidify Stewart (1994) and Henderson's (2004) critique of this theory as unsatisfying and outdated.

In concluding his discussion on third party success in Canada, Belanger (2007) notes that "[t]o summarize, we can observe that in Ontario and Manitoba, third parties have been rare and have had almost no success" making the Green party success in Guelph even more interesting (92). What factors led to the rise of the Ontario Green Party? Why was it successful in a province that had shunned this third party up to 2018? Perhaps these historical theorizations will explain, or perhaps new theories will be made. Either way, this exploration must take an in-depth look at the district that supported this minor party: Guelph, Ontario. But first we will need to get a sense of the bigger picture of Green Party success across western countries.

² Green Party Candidate Peter Bevan-Baker won in the riding of Kellys Cross-Cumberland, PEI in 2015 and Jenica Atwin was elected to represent Fredericton, NB in 2019

Chapter 3: Emergence of Green Politics and Political Parties –

From the Global to the Local

Europe and Australasia

This chapter will break down the historical emergence of Green parties in Europe and Australasia, Canada, and Ontario identifying the main themes that researchers agree typically lead to their emergence. These themes can be grouped into three categories: are 1) social (post-materialism, social movements, and populism); 2) economic (economy and party funding); 3) institutional (voting system and party competition). However, each region produces unique themes and changes in terms of the degree to which any party adheres to any given factor.

This project examines research studying Green party success in parliamentary systems, as the literature's discussion of the success and emergence of Green parties in Europe and Australasia will be used to contextualize and contrast this project's discussion of the Green party in Canada. An examination such as this additionally assesses the origin of Green parties. For instance, Green parties in Europe and Australasia were established many years prior to those in Canada (e.g. Belgium 1981 vs. Canada 2011). Only those countries using parliamentary systems of government will be examined so as to more effectively compare and contrast Green party success with Canada and Guelph. However, within these global systems there are differences, such as the use of different voting systems, and their possible impact will be addressed as well below.

Green Parties in Europe

Green movements and parties in Europe and Australasia have been present in one form or another since the early 1970s, beginning with the Values party which contested the 1972

Aotearoa New Zealand general election. From then on a host of environmentally-focused political parties emerged across western countries, like Sweden's Popular Movement for the Environment in 1972, Britain's PEOPLE (later the Ecology Party and then the Green Party) in 1973, France's Les Verts in 1982, and, of course, the German Greens (Die Grunen) in 1980, arguably the most successful parliamentary Green party so far as "[f]rom the late 1990s to 2000s they have been part of the ruling government" (Horvat & Tomašević, 2012:19).

Of course, the formation of a Green party does not necessarily mean electoral success. Many of these parties formed in the 1970s and 1980s but, as shown by Carter's (2013) chart below, did not achieve any sort of electoral success until years later. However, as also demonstrated in Carter's (2013) chart, every single one of these countries was successful in electing an MP before Canada was. Why was Canada so late in forming a Green party and succeeding in gaining electoral representation? Perhaps the circumstances and themes surrounding the success of European and Australasia parties will help us analyze Canadian developments.

Figure 2: Electoral performance of Green parties in 18 countries:

			Average % vote at national Elections				
			1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2019-2024
Austria	1986	20	4	6	10.3	10.4	14.8
Belgium a	1981	13	5.9	10.9	8	13.45	15.17
Finland	1983	10	2.8	6.9	7.9	9.3	16
France	1997	17	1.1	7.2	4.5	8.95	13.47
Germany	1983	68	5.1	6.3	9.2	10.7	20.5
Ireland	1989	0	1	2.1	3.4	2.25	11.37
Italy b	1987	0	2.5	2.7	2.1	n/a	2.32
Luxembourg	1984	7	6.8	8.9	11.7	15.01	18.91
Netherlands c	1990	4	0	5	5.1	6.98	10.9
Sweden	1988	25	2.9	4.3	5.7	15.5	11.52
Switzerland	1979	15	7.1	5.5	8.5	9.57	9.78
UK	2010	1	0.3	0.5	0.9	2.25	6.4
Czech Republic/Czechia	2006	0		1.1	3.7	2.36	0.99
Estonia d	2007	0	0	0	5.5	2.17	0.9
Hungary	2010	16	0	0	7.5	5.04	2.18
Australia	2010	1	0	2.3	7.9	10.26	12.25
Canada	2011	1	0	0.3	4.9	4.64	2.33
New Zealand	1996	14	0	6.1	7.5	9.37	9.75

(Carter, 2013; Electoral Commission New Zealand, 2025; European Parliament, 2024; Parliament of Canada, 2025; Sheppard, 2024; Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2024)

Notes:

a Combined results of Ecolo and Agalev/Groen.

b Excludes 2008 election when Greens contested as part of a far left coalition that secured just over 3% of the vote and no MPs.

c The figures refer to Groen Links (Green Left), not De Groenen.

d One Green MP was elected in 1992. The current Green Party reformed in 2006.

Post-Materialism

Of the various themes and hypothesis for Green party success in European parliamentary democracies, three are most common and agreed upon. These are the presence of post-materialism and its values, proportional representation, and the state of the economy. Post-materialism, a theory created by Inglehart in the 1970s, posits that the formative affluence experienced by post-war generations in many developed countries led to them shifting their focus from basic necessities such as food, employment and shelter, to non-material goals such as

self-expression, autonomy, freedom of speech, gender equality and, most importantly for the Greens, environmentalism.

This theory of post-materialism, as well as its projected intergenerational effects, are supported by the majority of researchers looking at Green party voting patterns (Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos 2013; Birch 2009; Dolezal 2010; Kitschelt 1989; Müller-Rommel 1998; Vasilopoulos & Demertzis, 2013; Otjes and Krouwel 2015; Rüdig 1985; Grant & Tilley, 2019). Indeed, Grant & Tilley (2019) argue that “[n]ew generations of voters raised in post-scarcity, and thus post-material, societies are liberated from the traditional political priorities of economic growth and redistribution and are instead more interested in pursuing ‘newer’ goals such as environmentalism” (497). This may mean that younger green party voters make the electoral choices they do because they are able to be more interested in ecological preservation because of their circumstances living in a post-materialist society.

Grant and Tilley (2019) therefore find strong support for post-materialism being a predictor of Green party support. They conducted a macro-scale European survey which examined Green party support using a “dataset of 347 parliamentary elections from 32 countries over the course of 45 years to test competing theories” creating a foundational study of Green party emergence. Grant & Tilley (2019) find that their results are “consistent with a post-materialist story, as high levels of economic development...are important predictors of the Green vote share” (496, 508). Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos (2013) similarly find support for post-materialism as a predictor of Green party support in their analysis of the 2012 French presidential election. They posit that, given the then recent electoral successes of the Europe-Écologie-Les Verts (EELV) party at the 2008 local, 2009 European and 2010 regional elections, more attention should be given to the demographic and attitudinal composition of the French

Green voter in the 2012 presidential election. Using qualitative phone interviews, Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos's study strongly supported post-materialism as an indicator of Green Party support, summarizing that "[p]ost-materialist values are a very strong predictor of the Green vote against any other vote" and echoed previous studies that show that Green voters are highly educated, young and living in cities, as well as being left-libertarian and environmentally aware (2013:281).

Interestingly, studies that examine the success of Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Green parties do not discuss the link between Green party success and post-materialism. Instead, authors like Rootes (2002; 2008) and Miragliotta (2013; 2015) find that factors such as permissive electoral systems and public subsidies are more frequently conditions that contribute to Green Party success, and much less of a discussion of post-materialism as a factor (Miragliotta, 2013). This may be due to post-materialism being established and taken for granted in these countries, and therefore not discussed, or simply being a factor that those studying the green parties in Australasia did not consider.

Starting with Inglehart in 1977 all the way to Grant and Tilley in 2019, this post-materialist predictor of Green party support therefore remains consistent at least in Europe, whether it is country specific studies (Clements, 2012; Vasilopoulos & Demertzis, 2013; Carter, 2013; Beaudonnet et. al., 2013; Miragliotta, 2013) or cross-Europe analysis (Petithomme, 2007; Dolezal, 2010; Grant & Tilley, 2019). However, though post-materialism is one of the most cited reasons for Green party support and emergence, it is in no way the only factor at play. Additionally, we see that it is not a significantly discussed factor in Australasia. Indeed, authors like Petithomme (2007) and Dolezal (2010) note that though post-materialism may have been an all-encompassing explanation for Green party emergence ten or twenty years ago, looking at the

discrepancies of Green party success in countries with similar levels of post-materialist values calls for further exploration. Post-materialism may provide the ground in which Green party support can grow, but without the seeds of economic growth and the water of permissive voting systems, a Green party will not flourish.

Economy

Since post-materialism is argued to be largely driven by economic development, the strength of the economy and the presence of post-material values may be considered to be the same factor when looking at Green party success. However, these two factors, the economy and post-materialism, must be considered separately as various studies show that, even if a voter has strong post materialist values, if the economy is not strong, they will not vote Green. This can be seen in both country specific and European and Australasia-wide studies, showing that the economy is not only separate from post-materialism, but is a key factor in the Green vote (Bürklin, 1985; Müller- Rommel, 1998; Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos, 2013; Kayser & Grafström, 2016; Abou-Chadi & Kayser, 2017; Grant & Tilley, 2019).

In fact, post-materialism can have a backlash against Green voting as when the economy suffers as voters can turn against these parties, seeing their post-material values as a “luxury” in times of crisis. Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Kayser (2017) note that “parties espousing ‘post-material’ issues only arise over the long-run in countries sufficiently wealthy to have vanquished the most pressing material concerns” and Kayser and Grafström (2016) posit that voters more strongly “support parties associated with ‘luxury good’ policies - such as environmental protection, funding for the arts and research, and even more abstract issues such as rights for

excluded groups and civil protections” when the economy is strong (Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Kayser, 2017:202).

Coming back to the examination of the 2012 French election by Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos (2013), after confirming the post-materialist profile of French Green voters, they further studied the impact of the economy on these voters. They wished to ascertain if a sinking economic situation decreases the likelihood of voting Green even if those voters were post-material. They argued that the 2012 election was a unique opportunity to study the “impact of economic insecurity on post-materialist voters, as described by Inglehart’s scarcity hypothesis (1990)” as this election was the first presidential contest with a competitor to EELV that took similar programmatic positions to the party, and second, it took “place in the context of a deep financial crisis where voters’ attention was overly focused on ‘old politics’ issues and away from the EELV alternative, post-materialist platform” (276). The context of this economic crisis, the authors posit, and the fact that the French Greens kept a traditional post-materialist agenda in their campaign provided an excellent opportunity for “for testing the impact of economic insecurity on post-materialist voters” as well as reaching “broader conclusions over the future of Green parties under the prolonged European crisis” (Beaudonnet et. al., 2013:276).

The authors hypothesised, giving credence to Inglehart’s scarcity hypothesis (1990), that the deteriorating economy, as reflected in the financial situations of the studies’ respondents, would have a significant negative impact on their probability of voting for EELV. Their analysis asked respondents about their personal economic conditions to assess the impact of the financial crisis on the Green vote, and they found their hypothesis to be correct: “[r]etrospective egocentric economic evaluations [had] a significant effect on vote choice, in the expected direction, draining voters away from the Green candidate” (B&V, 2013: 281). Multiple other

studies found similar results, supporting the claim that Green prosper during times of economic growth, but also suffer in times of economic scarcity (Abou-Chadi & Kayser, 2017; Grant & Tilley, 2019).

So even if a country is full of post-materialist voters (educated, young, wealthy etc.) they still may not vote Green if the economy is in a downturn. This is why post-materialism alone cannot predict Green party support – economic factors must be considered as well. However, there are countries that have experienced both good economic times and high levels of post-materialism and have still not seen Green parties find electoral success. How do we explain countries like Australia and Britain which, despite seeing times of strong economic growth and post materialism, lagged so far behind others with similar economic factors? For this we turn to the third major theme that support Green party emergence in Europe and Australasia: voting systems.

Voting Systems

The third most common reason attributed to the success or failure of Green parties in Europe and Australasia is voting systems and variations within voting systems: most consequently this means whether or not a country has in place a system of proportional representation. In Europe, a variety of systems of proportional representation have been in use from the beginning of the twentieth century, and eventually adopted by 40 of the 43 member states in the European union (Blais et. al., 2004). In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, MMP and the Single Transferable Vote (STV) forms of PR are more permissive to Green parties than FPTP systems. However, Australia only uses STV nationally for its upper house Senate elections. For its lower house it uses the majoritarian Alternative Vote (AV) which is not as

welcoming as PR, with the result that Greens have made little headway in Australia's lower house (Carol et. al., 2009; Miragliotta, 2013).

In a system of proportional representation, minority and independent candidates have a much better chance of being elected because parties gain seats in direct proportion to the number of votes they receive. Proportional representation also sets a much lower electoral threshold for gaining seats and allows parties to aggregate diffused support (Miragliotta, 2013). Due to this, proportional representation has been shown to facilitate the development of new parties, allow expressive and instrumental voters to show their support, and reduce the odds that a vote for a minor party is "wasted" (Rudig, 2006; Grant & Tilley, 2019). Gaining seats in this way, in turn, has been found to increase a party's credibility as a viable political party in the minds of the voters for future elections (Spoon, 2007).

Green parties also tend to be decentralized and have voters that are spread throughout many different voting districts (Müller-Rommel 1998; Carter, 2008; Miragliotta, 2013). Keeping with the tenets of post-materialism, many green voters are predominately urban, but they are not concentrated, and when majority electoral systems primarily reward highly concentrated regions of voters it is nearly impossible to convert this support into parliamentary representation. This means in a system like FPTP, there may be an "untapped reservoir of green voters" who are unable to give their support based solely on the region or voting system they find themselves in (Carter, 2008: 65, Rudig, 1991).

As the majority of Green parties are smaller, newer, and have a more decentralized voter base than traditional parties, proportional representation systems directly benefit them, helping parties convert support into representation (Rudig, 1991; Kaelberer, 1998; Birch, 2009; Carter, 2008; Carroll et. al., 2009; Davidson, 1996; Grant & Tilley, 2019). For example, Belgium and

Germany, both which use variations of proportional representation, have arguably “the most successful Green part[ies] in the world”, having gained parliamentary seats in 1981 and 1983, respectively, and since then has always had Green MP’s in parliament (Hooghe et. al., 2010:932; Carter, 2013). Whereas, in the winner take all systems of Britain and France, Green parties have had much less success (McCulloch, 1992; Kaelberer, 1998; Petithomme, 2007; Carter, 2008; Birch, 2009). Though most authors agree that “[t]he existence of proportional systems is not a guarantee for successful development of green parties, nor does the absence of proportional rules represent an insurmountable obstacle for green parties” they also insist that permissive electoral systems and institutions do matter and “it is clear that the use of proportional representation in these contests greatly benefited the Greens” (Carter, 2008:227; Kaelberer, 1998; Petithomme, 2007; Grant & Tilly, 2019)

Those who study Green party success in the remaining European countries not using some form of PR cite the voting system as a major stumbling block. Birch (2009) and Carter (2008), in separate examinations of Green parties in the UK, note that although the British Green party is in fact Europe’s oldest – established in 1973 and named ‘People’ – it has been awarded some of the least amount of success due to the FPTP system it exists within. Due to its winner-takes-all format, in general elections people are “unwilling to ‘waste’ their votes on a party that has little chance of winning a seat” (Carter, 2008:227). And this unwillingness is valid because despite having up to 15% of the vote, which at times placed them at third in party support, due to the winner take all FPTP system this support translated into zero seats for the UK Green party (Rudig, 1991; Birch, 2009). So, despite a long-standing following, as well as an increase in recent support due to anxieties surrounding global warming, Birch (2009) posits that Green parties will continue to be unsuccessful without some form of proportional representation as

FPTP “is the main obstacle to Green electoral wins in Britain” (55). The impact of the voting system can be seen in the very different results achieved by UK Green parties in post-1997 elections to the European Parliament, the Greater London Assembly, and the devolved Scottish Parliament, all of which used proportional or semi-proportional voting system, while national elections continued to use first-past-the-post. All of the former elected a number of Greens while the latter only finally elected one Green in 2010 and remained at the level in three subsequent contests (Dennison, 2015)

Studies in Australasia also cite variations of proportional representation as one of the main factors for recent Green party success. Until 1918, Australia used the FPTP system, but then switched to the Majority Alternative Vote system for its national lower house elections. Miragliotta (2013) posits that this partiality for single-member electoral districts is a major institutional barrier as “house elections has inhibited the Greens from converting its predominately urban, but comparatively thinly spread, support into parliamentary representation, resulting in the Greens being consistently underrepresented in the national parliament and severely constraining its prospects of participating in government at federal level” (708). They note that the experience of the Australian Greens in the STV-PR using upper house shows that a system of proportional representation, if implemented, has the potential to create institutional settings that are sufficiently flexible for Green parties to gain meaningful representation.

Carroll et. al. (2009) similarly notes that a previous FPTP electoral system in Aotearoa New Zealand firmly entrenched two major parties in power, making it incredibly difficult for new and smaller parties, like the Greens, to gain representation. However, an introduction of MMP in 1996, though taking time to make change due to “strong voter identification and loyalty from the majority of voters to the Labour and National parties” (258), has been argued to be

“vitally important, not just because it is a fairer system of representation, but because ‘it is the best guarantee of the sustained input of a green perspective into decision-making’ (Rainbow 1992, pp. 31, 34)” (Carroll et. al. 2009:259). Since this change, Green parties in Aotearoa New Zealand have been successful in electing representatives throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s.

Environmental Issues and Social Protests

After the main three reasons for Green party emergence, there are a variety of other factors that are cited as being additional factors in Green support. Some of these are agreed upon widely, while others have mixed support. These factors are varied, but can be grouped into two categories: environmental events and the social movements that surround them and the party politics of funding and competition. The most prominent secondary factor is that of an environmental concern or event, such as clean water, deforestation, forest fires, wildlife preservation, etc., all of which Green parties have mobilized around at different points of time. However, given that the majority of European Green parties saw their origin in the 1980s, it should come as no surprise that there was one overwhelmingly universal and measurable issue for emergence: opposition to nuclear power (Kreuzer, 1990; Davidson, 1996; Carroll et. al., 2009; Grant & Tilley, 2019).

The anti-nuclear movements of the 1970s and 1980s were conducive to the formation of Green parties for two reasons. First, in countries like Germany, Finland and Italy, these movements brought large groups of civically engaged and active groups together which facilitated the subsequent formation of Green parties (Rootes, 1995b; Kreuzer, 1990; Carter, 2008; Grant & Tilley, 2019). Similarly, Aotearoa New Zealand Green parties used “nuclear issues, as well as local environmental issues, as well as swell of environmental concern in

1980s” as stimuli for action and to rally support (Davidson, 1992; Carroll et. al., 2009:260).

Second, electoral research found that existing parties struggled to address concerns surrounding the green agenda and nuclear power, allowing Green parties to claim they best represented these concerns (Inglehart 1984, 1990; Knutsen 1987; Dalton et al. 1984; Kreuzer, 1990; Rüdig, 2006).

One example of this was in France where, in the early 1970’s, the government embarked on an ambitious nuclear expansion program. Environmental pressure groups, including antinuclear groups, were given no opportunity to influence policymaking outside of politics due to the highly centralized and closed French government and therefore participation in elections was one of the very few opportunities for political action. As a result, “ecological groups began to participate in elections as early as 1973” and citizens concerned with nuclear power saw supporting these Green parties as their best opportunity to have their opinions heard. Therefore, the turmoil surrounding nuclear power was the catalyst for Green party emergence in France and may have been an opening for their election in the country if it had not been for their restrictive majority voting system (Rüdig, 1985, 1991:8).

Despite some studies showing that nuclear concerns provided ongoing support for Green parties, such as Schumacher’s 2014 study which looked at determinants of individuals’ Green voting behavior in Germany and found that the “empirically strongest determinants are the voters’ attitude or distance to nuclear sites,” some researchers note that this support actually poses an issue for Green parties as shifting public focus and the phasing out of nuclear power, combined with the inability to encompass new policy issues, may lead to a collapse in their support base (Rüdig, 1991; Dalton, 2009; Müller-Rommel, 2002). Indeed, Rüdig (1991) notes that “[a]lthough the activity levels of the ecology, antinuclear, and peace movements fluctuated, often quite wildly, in the 1980s, the early 1990s have been characterized by a definite downturn

in such activity” (30). Mitigating this concern, however, are recent studies of Green party support that show that an increase of concern surrounding another environmental event, climate change, may replace or transition this support base (Barry & Doherty, 2001; Rootes, 2008; Birch, 2009; Carter, 2010; Dolezal, 2010; Vasilopoulos & Demertzis, 2013).

Both the issues of nuclear power and climate change and the subsequent success of Green parties are intrinsically linked to the social movements that surrounded such issues. Those interested in political change and party creation attempted to transform the swell of support given to these issues into support for Green parties that promised to address these issues. Examples of this were in Germany, France, Finland and Italy where new social movement activity and the broad coalitions of environmental and leftist groups was an important catalyst for the development of green parties.

Alternatively, Carter (2008) gives us an example of a country where Green parties suffered from a lack of such a support base. In Britain, already faced with a hostile FPTP electoral system, the Green party was “the brainchild of a small discussion circle of concerned conservative environmentalists” and had no broad social movements to bolster it (230). This was due to the fact that social movements attempted to stay non-partisan in Britain, as they feared “that close association with an outsider party on the political fringe might reduce their access to government or risk alienating their membership” and when these concerns did arise in other parties, like the Labour party, they included such movements so there was no reason to turn to a Green party (Carter, 2008:230). Subsequently, the British Green party, as mentioned previously, struggled to establish itself and has fared some of the worst electoral support in the EU.

Funding

Another factor which facilitates the emergence of Green parties is a country's political funding structure. All countries provide a certain amount of state funding for political parties, but the threshold at which a party can access this funding is key to small parties like the Greens gaining a foothold. Public subsidies that are allocated on vote share, like those in Germany, bolster the financial and organisational competence of emerging Green parties, whereas funding that relies on parliamentary representation, like that in Britain, when denied to small parties, makes it much harder to break into the political scene (Rüdig, 1991; McCulloch, 1992; Burchell 2002; Carter, 2008; Birch, 2009). In fact, Petithomme (2007) cites this difference in subsidy structure as one of the main reasons why Green parties in these two countries, Britain and Germany, which have very similar post-material and economic circumstances, can differ so greatly in success.

In Australia, Miragliotta (2013) notes that this vote share allocation system of funding is beneficial to their Green party as once a candidate or party reaches the threshold of 4% of formal first preference votes the federal scheme allocates funding which is "generally advantageous to challenger parties and ameliorates some of the financial consequences of electoral defeats" (709). Both Miragliotta (2013) and Rootes (2002) cite this funding as an ongoing support for the Green party as well, as was seen in their success in the 2001 and 2010 federal elections, where in both their increase in support led to their share of public funding increasing substantially, representing approximately 70% of the party's total revenue, even if their formal parliamentary representation was still low.

Alternatively, in Aotearoa New Zealand, Davidson (1996) notes that "the financial deposit required to field a political party provides a threshold which makes it hard for small

parties with limited resources to mount a serious election challenge” (73). This, in combination with a previously entrenched FPTP system, and the fact that the amount of state subsidised advertising is calculated on the basis of (among other things) the Party’s showing in the previous election, means that Aotearoa New Zealand Green parties, and those in similar situations, struggled to launch and maintain successful ongoing advertising and recruitment campaigns.

Party Competition

The final theme of Green party emergence is one which is contested – some authors find evidence for it and others find differing results over time – but as so many mention it, it would be negligent not to include it here. This theme is party competition, and more specifically, it is a discussion of whether mainstream parties acknowledging or dismissing environmental issues leads to the emergence of Green parties. Several authors find that party competition is crucial to Green party development (Rootes, 1995b, Miragliotta, 2013; Otjes, Simon, and Krouwel, 2015; Carter, 2008). Indeed, Kitschelt (1988) argues that party competition is key to Green party development, either creating opportunity or imposing “significant constraints—or in some cases even insurmountable obstacles—for the development of green parties” (299). Others find that results on whether accommodative or dismissive strategies by mainstream parties create fertile ground for Green parties to emerge but then change over time (Dalton, 2009; Grant & Tilley, 2019).

When examining the dynamics of party competition, Meguid (2005, 2008) finds that it is not only other small parties that influence Green party success. In fact, strategic responses from established mainstream parties can make or break a small party, like the Greens, when it comes to environmental issues. Meguid (2005, 2008) lays out three possible strategies that these larger

parties can employ towards the niche party's key issue: dismissive, adversarial, and accommodative. Dismissive would mean a mainstream party ignoring the issue, adversarial would be denying it, and accommodative would be creating policy to reflect it. Using this rubric for party competition, the majority of authors find that dismissive and adversarial strategies help Green parties (Meguid, 2005, 2008; Carter, 2008; Miragliotta, 2013; Abou-Chadi, 2016) whereas accommodative strategies hurt them (Rüdig, 1985; Rohrschneider, 1993; Carter, 2008; Otjes, Simon, Krouwel, 2015 Grant and Tilley, 2019).

There are also studies which look at party competition and their results are mixed over time. One of these is once again Grant and Tilley's 2019 exploration of the emergence of Green parties. Part of their study was to examine "political opportunity factors centred around the presence of rival parties and, crucially, the strategies of mainstream parties," specifically the accommodative, adversarial and dismissive strategies of mainstream parties in response to green issues (501). Also citing Meguid (2005, 2008), Grant and Tilley (2019) hypothesized that accommodative strategies by mainstream parties would decrease Green party vote share and they found this to be true: "[h]olding all else equal, accommodative strategies deplete the vote share of a Green party for roughly the first three elections it contests" having the potential to smother Green parties at birth (508). However, results become mixed in the long term. Grant & Tilley (2019) found that after those first three elections the effect flips, and "mainstream accommodative strategies actually start to boost the Green vote" (508). This may explain why, when Green parties find a foothold, they tend to hang on.

Further authors that posit that party competition is key to Green party emergence look at countries like The Netherlands, Denmark, Australia and Britain. In The Netherlands 0.7% of the vote is sufficient to elect an MP to the national parliament which means small parties have plenty

of opportunity to get parliamentary representation. However, long-standing pro-environmental attitudes of Dutch voters meant that the environment was always high on both the mainstream and small party agenda and subsequently accommodated. In the 1970s and 1980s parties like The Radical Party (PPR), The Pacifist-Socialist Party (PSP) and The Democrats '66 (D'66) all incorporated environmental issues and therefore took on the role Green parties played in other countries (Rüdig, 1985). This was a very similar situation to Denmark where environmental and antinuclear demands were taken up by the Social Democrats and Left Socialists. These accommodative strategies therefore inhibited the formation of a Green party as it left little room for such a party to rally behind and claim the issue for their own (Rüdig, 1985; Otjes, Simon, Krouwel, 2015).

There is also stark evidence for the power of party competition with the failings of the Green party in the UK. Already in a losing battle with FPTP, the British Greens were further sidelined as the focus of environmental politics was on established parties and the environmental lobby, leaving “little space for the Greens to occupy and few opportunities for them to exploit the main issue where they might impress — the environment” (Rüdig, 1985; Carter 2008:231). Additionally, the topic of the environment was never a contested issue between mainstream parties, with the Conservative and Labour parties, at least until recently, adopting a preference-accommodation strategy which stopped the issue becoming an adversarial topic or issue of party-competition (Rüdig, 1985; Carter 2008). Whenever environmental issues in Britain did arise, they were successfully integrated, either by administrative procedures or by trade unions and political parties, into the political system, leaving no conflict or gap on which a Green party could capitalize (Rüdig, 1985). This was found to be true in Australia as well where Miragliotta (2013) notes that the nature of party competition encouraged established parties to absorb new

issues like the environment. This allowed environmentally concerned voters to maintain partisanship with major parties instead of breaking away to support a new Green party.

A key to success when facing party competition, therefore, may be a Green party's ability to incorporate issues beyond just ecology. In countries like Aotearoa New Zealand, Finland, and Italy Green party platforms encompassed not only local environmental and nuclear issues, but also social justice and participatory democracy, so as to appeal to the movements surrounding those issues as well and "[c]onsequently, green parties in these countries were rooted in a wider political network and had a large pool of potential supporters" (Kreuzer, 1990; Carter, 2008:230; Carroll et. al., 2009; Grant & Tilley, 2019).

Kaelberer (1998), when comparing the perennial success of the German Greens to the failure of the French's, notes that "Green parties can develop successfully only where party competition provides them with sufficient political space and where Green parties successfully adopt strategies to occupy this space" noting that German Greens took on a variety of social issues to gain support so as to overcome party competition and won, whereas French Greens did not and failed (299). The German Greens benefitted from the support of a wide range of environmentalists, peace and feminist activists, as the party was specifically created to give political and parliamentary representation to these movements. Horvat & Tomašević (2012) dub them a classic 'patchwork' party, as they opposed NATO military actions, nuclear energy and pollution in general, but also authoritarianism and some aspects of industrialisation, and were lent support from groups whose interests aligned (Davidson, 1992). Therefore, as Rüdig (1991) also notes, the German Greens first achievement was uniting a broad spectrum of activists to support their party. Many other authors also cite this willingness to include issues beyond the environment, such as feminist, socialist, peace and immigrant issues, as the impetus for green

party success in the face of party competition (Rüdig, 1985; Kaelberer, 1998; Barry & Doherty, 2001; Rootes, 2002; Miragliotta, 2013).

Rüdig (1985) characterises this difference as “rainbow vs. purist” Green parties. Rainbow parties encompass a range of issues, from feminist to socialist to youth, in addition to environmental and therefore “represent a broad alliance” and are able to draw support from all of those movements (70). Purist parties resist this broadening and resolutely refrain from incorporating any other issues other than ecological into their party mandate, fearing that this may dilute their identity and ideology. There is no straightforward recipe for success when it comes to rainbow versus purist. The German Greens are a typical rainbow party, and of course have been extremely successful, but the Belgium Greens are purist and have been similarly successful. However, most purist parties, when facing obstacles like FPTP voting systems and a lack of a social movement base, can “can hardly expect to make any impact unless they initiate some broader alliance” unless they “develop more appealing political positions with regard to the dominant social and economic issues of the day” (Rüdig, 1985:71).

A further consideration for Green parties which relates to political competition is whether accommodative strategies by mainstream parties hurts a Green party’s long term success. Seeing the emergence and success of Green parties may force mainstream parties to add the environment to their political agenda and this, in turn, may take away support for the Green party – especially if they are viewed as a single-issue party (Rüdig, 2006; Rootes, 2008; Abou-Chadi, 2016). Grant and Tilley’s 2019 study is one that asks this question, and others are sure to follow. There are also questions surrounding Green party success as simply a protest vote, and, as a Green party becomes more established, they may actually lose this vote as they begin to be seen as mainstream (Carter, 2010). However, as this dissertation focuses on mainly the emergence of

Green parties, not their continued success once formed, these discussions are beyond the scope of this research. This is no doubt an important and compelling discussion that should be discussed given the rise in Green party support and their continued political presence.

Another strategy employed by Green parties to gain electoral success is a willingness to enter into coalitions with other political parties (Rüdiger, 1991; Rootes, 2002; Dumont & Bäck, 2006; Dumont & Bäck, 2006; Carter, 2010). These political alliances allow for Green parties to represent voters in parliament, even if they do not necessarily have the voter base to get them there on their own. The dynamics of government coalitions and how they may limit a party's ability to stay true to their ideology if they are beholden to their coalition is a conversation worth having, however, as these coalitions are created once a Green party has already been formed, it is a conversation to be had in research looking at long term success of Green parties.

Populism

While the theme of populism was not raised by the scholars studying Green party emergence and success in the Europe and Australasia, we would be remiss not to analyze it in this political context given its reach and prevalence across most of Western Europe. Looking again at its three main tenets, people vs. elite framing, anti-establishment rhetoric, and majoritarianism and the general will, we can question whether there are parallels to be drawn with the rhetoric and advertisement of Green party politics.

For the first pillar of populism, elite vs. people, Green parties in Europe and Australasia do not conform to this rhetoric, and, according to various scholars, may actually epitomize the opposite. Indeed, as mentioned previously, Abou-Chadi and Kayser (2017) have noted that Green parties have faced backlash from being associated with “luxury goods” (202). This may be

because those who form and vote for Green parties are more likely to be both wealthy (Grant & Tilley, 2019; Hooghe et al., 2010; Schumacher, 2014) and educated (Beaudonnet & Vasilopoulos, 2014; Hooghe et al., 2010; Schumacher, 2014).

The second pillar, the rhetoric of rejecting forms of establishment, Green parties in EU and Australasia once again do not conform as evidenced through the themes of voting systems, party funding and environmental and social events. We see that Green parties are very much in favour of government established voting systems, when these systems include some form of proportional representation. Perhaps in countries like England and France, where Green parties struggle to establish themselves due to the FPTP system, there may be calls for a rejection of establishment, but so far it seems that Green parties instead focus on advocating for including proportional representation in their government, not rejecting the system altogether. This is very similar when it comes to party funding. Greens tend to advocate for, and benefit from, more support from the establishment, not less, when it comes to party funding. Finally for forms of protest and social movements, we see that protesters who went on to form Green parties did so because they wanted in to the establishment, not wanting to reject it.

Finally, the third tenet of populism, a claim to represent the “true” or “majority” will, can be seen to have some parallels with Green party formation and success in the Europe and Australasia, but the argument is nuanced. Though an argument can be made that Green parties present themselves as representing a silent majority of people who care for the environment and want change from the status-quo, they do not tend to de-legitimize dissent or pluralism by framing opponents as enemies of the people. In fact, as we have seen, “rainbow” parties, those that have opened their policies and goals to extend beyond just ecology and environmentalism to embrace other concerns and viewpoints, have been some of the most successful (Rudig, 1991).

Having assessed and discussed the themes posited as factors in the emergence and success of Green parties in Europe and Australasia, we now take these themes and apply them to Canada to determine which are relevant, which are not, and ascertain if any new themes should be added to the list. Before doing this, however, this work will provide a brief overview of the Green Party of Canada itself: its origins, its principles and its history.

Canada

The Green Party of Canada (GPC) was formed in 1984 at a conference held at Carleton University. Inspired by the success of sister parties in Aotearoa New Zealand and Germany, the Green Party of Canada set out to replace the traditional left-versus-right political debate in favour of a new emphasis on protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. It was founded on six key principles to which it still adheres to today: ecological wisdom, non-violence, social justice, sustainability, participatory democracy, and respect for diversity. Its leader was Trevor Hancock, and in the Federal election of 1984, the party ran 60 candidates.

Since that time the party has developed as an organization, expanding its membership and increasing its numbers in Canadian polls. In the 2000 federal election, the party fielded 111 candidates, up from 78 in 1997, and in 2004 the party successfully ran a candidate in every one of the 308 available ridings. In 2004 the party also secured 4.3 percent of the popular vote, surpassing the 2 percent threshold required for party financing under new Elections Canada rules. This threshold was met again in 2006, allowing for professionalization of the party and paid employees and positions due to the increased government funding (Jansen & Lambert, 2013).

Between 1984 and 2016 the party has garnered between 0.21 and 6.8 percent of the Canadian vote and has been able to run a full slate of candidates in federal elections since 2004 (Dornan and Pammett, 2004). In addition to its first leader, Trevor Hancock, the Green party of Canada has seen 10 different leaders in its history, some of the most notable including Joan Russow (1997-2001), Jim Harris (2003-2006) and Elizabeth May (2006-2019 & 2022 – Present). Over the years the party has seen highs with things like funding and popular vote percentages as well as lows with infighting and difficulty with credibility.

Figure 3: First Federal Green Party MPs and Seats

Green Party of Canada		
	First Ran Green MP	Won a seat
British Columbia	1984	2011
Alberta	1984	
Saskatchewan	1984	
Ontario	1984	2021
Quebec	1984	
PEI	1984	
North West territories	1993	
Nova Scotia	1993	
Newfoundland	1997	
Manitoba	2000	
Nunavut	2000	
New Brunswick	2004	2019
Yukon	2004	

Figure 4: Federal Green Party Electoral Results 1984-2025

Election	# of candidates nominated	# of seats won	# of total votes	% of popular vote
1984	60	0	26,921	0.21%
1988	68	0	47,228	0.36%
1993	79	0	32,979	0.24%
1997	79	0	55,583	0.43%
2000	111	0	104,402	0.81%
2004	308	0	582,247	4.32%
2006	308	0	665,940	4.48%
2008	303	0	941,097	6.80%
2011	304	1	576,221	3.91%
2015	338	1	605,637	3.45%
2019	338	3	1,189,607	6.55%
2021	338	2	397,014	2.33%
2025	343	1	240,607	1.2%

Source: (Parliament of Canada, 2025)

These highs and lows of success can be attributed to both similar and different factors compared to Green parties in the Europe and Australasia. Canada's first-past-the-post voting system, for example, has been consistently cited as a major roadblock to the Green Party's success, as they tend to have support, but that support is spread thinly throughout the country (Russow, 2000; Harada, 2004; 2006; 2008; Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008). On the other hand, new factors, such as the leader of the party, and the role of the leaders debate in Canadian elections are given much more credence in the success of a party in Canada than abroad (Clark, Kornberg & Scott, 2008 & 2011; Leduc & Pammett, 2008; Clark et. al., 2011; Clarke & Stewart, 2019).

However, it is difficult to fully compare the literature surrounding both Canadian Green party success and Europe and Australasia's Green Party success for two reasons. First, the Canadian Green party is relatively young compared to some. Second, perhaps due to its youth, there is a dearth of literature surrounding the Green Party of Canada. Despite being founded in

1984, edited academic collections focusing on different elections do not even mention the GPC until 1993 (Frizzell et al., 1994), and even then, only a footnote in the appendices. Unlike its European counterparts, very few long-term success studies or comparative articles exist. Therefore, this analysis is gleaned from academic articles mainly discussing climate change and Canadian political parties generally, and supplemented heavily by the regular publications of federal election summaries. From these sources this study has compared the EU and Australasia themes of post-materialism, the economy, voting systems, and to a lesser extent, party funding, party competition and environmental and social events to analyze where the similarities and differences lie.

When it comes to the similarities, post-materialism, party funding, voting systems and party competition are themes which also apply to the success (or lack thereof) of the Canadian Green party, whereas the themes of social or environmental events play much less of a role. More complicated is the role of the economy as, though it is an agreed upon factor, it is difficult to conduct a comparative analysis when you are only looking at one country. Additionally, new themes, unique from the EU and Australasia, emerge. These themes are the role of the leader of the party, national debates during an election, and internal party conflict.

Post-materialism

An average GDP per capita of 43,100 USD, universal healthcare, and a highly educated populace locates Canada firmly in the category of a post-materialist country. Anderson and Stephenson (2011), in line with EU and Australasia's findings, find post-materialist values as a major, recurrent factor in environmental concern in Canada and that this concern is "naturally linked to politics by the understanding that as citizen values change, so too do the demands of

government” (342). Authors like Grant and Tilley (2019) include Canada in the list of post-materialist countries in their international cross-country analysis on the subject. Also in line with European studies, this post-materialist shift to growing concern for the environment may have been the impetus for the Green party in Canada to form two decades ago, but given the party’s varied success since, it is clear again that it is not the only factor at play (Petithomme, 2007; Dolezal, 2010).

The link between post-materialism and ongoing support for the GPC is even more clear. In 2007 Camcastle conducted the first ever academic survey of the members of the Canadian Green party which examined both Canadians who voted for the GPC and Canadians who were members of the party. They found that strong evidence of post-materialist values in both voters and members:

A quarter of the members and an even larger proportion of the voters of GPC are younger than 35 years of age, although most members are middle age and older. The percentage of members with a university degree is greater in GPC than in other Canadian parties and green parties elsewhere. The preponderant majority of members of GPC are from the new middle class.

Camcastle (2007:641) further notes that “the members are staunch supporters of ecologism and environmentalism, and in contrast to green parties elsewhere the Green Party of Canada is located at the centre of the political spectrum”.

The GPC may be aware of this as, in the past, they have targeted ridings with high post-materialist values like Guelph, Saanich-Gulf Islands, and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound (Harada, 2011). In 2011 John Fryer, the campaign manager for Elizabeth May noted that “the Greens don't do too well at getting working people’s votes. They are very much a sort of middle and upper middle-class kind of party in terms of people that they attract...” (Harada, 2011:146). Part of the reason the GPC picked Saanich-Gulf Islands for their leader May’s riding was that “residents in

the gulf islands, centred on Saltspring Island, were viewed as being a natural green consistency” as they were a mix of wealthy retired and young immigrants (Harada, 2011:151). May won the riding in 2011 and has held it ever since. The presence of post-materialism and its values are only one factor, however, as it may mean there are voters who are willing to vote for a party that eschews environmentalism, but such a party first needs funds to recruit and field candidates, advertise their platform, and organize. At a national level, this can mean huge amounts of money that goes beyond what grassroots fundraising can establish, and so equally important to the success of a party is public funding.

Party Funding

The concept of using public money to fund political parties in Canada is not unique. Indeed, as mentioned previously, many other countries have some form of this public subsidy. This may take the form of subsidizing certain activities of parties, such as media and mailings in Aotearoa New Zealand (Davidson, 1992), or as more monetary support such as unconditional subsidies, like in Germany or Sweden where funding is based on the votes or seats won in the preceding election (Rüdig, 1991; Carter, 2008). The history of Canadian election financing and its subsequent effect on the Green Party of Canada can be divided into three time periods, beginning with the years prior to 2004, changes made in 2004, and the aftermath of these changes in the years after 2004.

Prior to 2004, corporations, unions and individuals could make large monetary donations to political parties and their campaigns, and given their expanded networks and reach, Russow (2000) argues that this meant that larger parties were much more likely to benefit from these donations. Not only that, Russow (2000) further notes that the election formula that controlled

public subsidies was also skewed to favour the main parties – what Russow refers to as “the Pentad parties” in reference to “group of five parties (the Bloc Québécois, the Canadian Alliance, the Conservatives, the Liberals, and the NDP) represented in the House of Commons” (Russow, 2000). This formula, section 441 of the Elections Act, was that “a party can spend \$2.07 for each of the first 15,000 electors, \$1.04 for each of the next 10,000 electors and \$0.52 for each of the remaining electors” (157). Given the vote share received by large parties versus smaller parties, this meant that “these ‘limits’ fail to create a level playing field, as the Pentad spending is far in excess of that of the non-Pentad parties” (Russow, 2000:157).

Another election finance law which “perpetuate[d] a vicious circle” of inequity for small Canadian parties was that, under Section 435, if a “party obtains a certain percentage of the vote in a previous election, the party is reimbursed from the public purse for 22.5 percent of their election expenses (if candidates endorsed by the registered party received at least 2 percent of the number of valid votes cast in the election or 5 percent of the number of valid votes cast in the electoral districts in which the registered party endorsed a candidate)” (Russow, 2000:157).

All of this combined meant that whenever an election was called, large parties already had considerable funds at their disposal and could borrow more from banks against the likelihood of getting subsidies. This also mean that large parties had the money to professionalize – hiring staff year-round, having access to mailing and media advertising, and organizing well run and successful fundraising campaigns that increased their funds even further (Harada, 2004; Flanagan & Jansen, 2008). Both between and going into elections, small parties like the GPC would be seriously disadvantaged as they had to run a campaign with several thousands of dollars, compared to larger parties having access to several million.

All this changed, however, in the first half of 2003 when the Liberal government lead by Jean Chrétien pushed through Bill C-24 (Bill C-24: *An Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act*) which made major changes to The Canadian Elections Act. The bill amended the Act so that, among other things, trade union and corporate contributions to riding associations and candidates were capped at one thousand dollars, putting an end to large corporate donations to parties. The bill also extended “regulatory control over leadership conventions, nomination contests and riding associations” (Stewart, 2005; Young, Sayers & Jansen, 2007). But most poignantly for small parties like the GPC, Bill C-24 made it so that “any political party receiving more than 2% of the national popular vote (or more than 5% in those constituencies it contested) would be entitled to allowances from the public treasury equivalent to \$1.75 per year for every vote received in the preceding general election” (Stewart, 2005). This meant that the GPC would directly financially benefit from each vote they received.

A second change that benefited the GPC was Bill C-3: An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and Income Tax Act. This change was the result of a court challenge brought forward by Miguel Figueroa, the leader of the Communist Party of Canada, ten years prior in 1993. Though it took Figueroa a decade, in 2004 Bill C-3 “wiped out previous conditions that political parties had to meet in order to become registered: after considerable debate, the number of candidates that parties were required to field in an election was set by Parliament at only one – down from the previous requirement of fifty” (Harada, 2004:173). Though this change was not directly related to party funding, it went a long way in gaining credibility for the GPC as they now had a much more obtainable threshold to meet to be registered.

This was fortuitous timing for the GPC as, once the results for the 2004 elections were tallied, they had managed to surpass the 2 percent national threshold. Counting on this subsidy,

the GPC ran a full slate of 308 candidates in the 2004 election, which no doubt contributed to their huge breakthrough – going from 0.81 percent of the vote to 4.32 percent – which meant the Green Party received an influx of public subsidies, approximately \$1 million annually in public funding, providing them a sizeable budget for the very first time (Harada, 2004; Harold & Lambert, 2013). Additionally, aware of what this change would do, the Green Party borrowed against its future income in order to raise the funds necessary to mount a professional national campaign. This change in funding structure was so fortuitous for the Green party that it is cited by global scholars as an illustrative policy that could support other Green or small parties abroad (Birch, 2009).

Janson and Lambert (2013) take an in-depth look at the 2004 federal electoral finance laws and uses the GPC as case study. They wanted to know if this huge influx of money for the GPC would lead to professionalization and centralization and found the answer were yes and not really, respectively. In terms of centralization, both Janson and Lambert (2013) and Harada (2004) note that big changes were made by the party: they rented office space, made daily press releases, held full-blown formal news conferences, and hired full-time staff which were able to create, maintain and update a bilingual professional website. This did seem to improve their numbers as the GPC went on to increase vote percentages in the next two federal elections.

However, to quote a colloquialism: with “no money no problems” (B.I.G., 1997). Janson and Lambert (2013) note that the party struggled with differing views on centralization and with how to distribute these new funds among the central office, provincial divisions and electoral district associations (EDA’s). There was internal disagreement over whether the party should provide targeted funding – giving more money to EDA’s where Green Party support was strong in hopes of electing MPs to send to Ottawa or giving more to the central campaign to gain

credibility (Harada, 2006; Young, Sayers & Jansen, 2007). In the end the party decided on “a uniquely Green solution” which “after a mail-in ballot in September 2005, [saw] members agreed to a revenue sharing formula that divided up the money three ways — between the central party, each registered electoral district association, and the provincial divisions” (Harada, 2006:152).

This resisted centralization and decreased EDA’s reliance on fundraising, but it also increased the central party’s influence on EDA’s as they held the purse drawstrings of subsidy funding. This agreement was updated at a 2010 GPC general meeting to keep more money in control of the central party which allowed them to pay off loans, but this was only with the understanding that the money was still to be used to organize and build EDAs (Jansen & Lambert, 2013). This disagreement over the use of funding was one of several instances of infighting that the GPC struggled with and is a factor in their success to be discussed shortly.

The final advantage that this per-vote subsidy gave the Greens was that it allowed them to get out the critical message that no vote was a wasted vote. Harada (2004) notes that “[t]o win over soft support — Canadians who liked their policies but who might not be inclined to vote for a party still far from the centre of power — the Greens reinforced the fact that every vote would be worth \$1.75” and would help the Green Party build a credible voice in Canada (2013:178). Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the GPC saw such a huge breakthrough in the 2004 election, obtaining 4.32 percent of the vote compared to their 0.81 percent in the previous 2000 results (Harada, 2004; Young, Sayers & Jansen, 2007). This also in a way combatted the first-past-the-post strategic voting issue that the GPC so struggles with.

Boosted by the success of the 2004 election and the subsequent federal funding from the new vote subsidy, the Greens entered into the 2006 election campaign with more money, and

hence more staff, than ever before. However, Harada (2006) notes that paying for official party hires instead of volunteers and after paying off debts and loans, the GPC still had to borrow for their 2005-2006 effort. This paid off though, if only barely, as the Greens increased their vote percentage once again, but only incrementally, from 4.38% to 4.48%.

Then Conservative government leader Steven Harper called another federal election in 2008 and it was there that Canada saw its most widespread Green support. Despite the most dismal voter turnout in Canadian history (59%), the GPC saw its popular vote increase to 6.8% which meant it was entitled to approximately 1.8 million in federal subsidies (Harada, 2008; Flanagan & Jansen, 2008; Clarke, Kornber & Scotto, 2008). In addition, 41 Green candidates, compared to 7 in 2006, obtained over 10%, the crucial mark dividing those candidates who can receive federally funded reimbursements for good chunk of their campaign expenses allowing them to “pay the bills and replenish the bank accounts at the local level” (Harada 2008:164). However, the issue with this widespread support was exactly that – it was widespread. In Canada’s first-past-the-post system, where regionally concentrated votes are what is needed to elect MPs, the Green numbers were too spread out, and despite being the best support they had ever had, the Green Party failed to elect a single MP, and therefore gain any representation or power, in 2008. This points again to voting systems being key to Green party success, but more on that later.

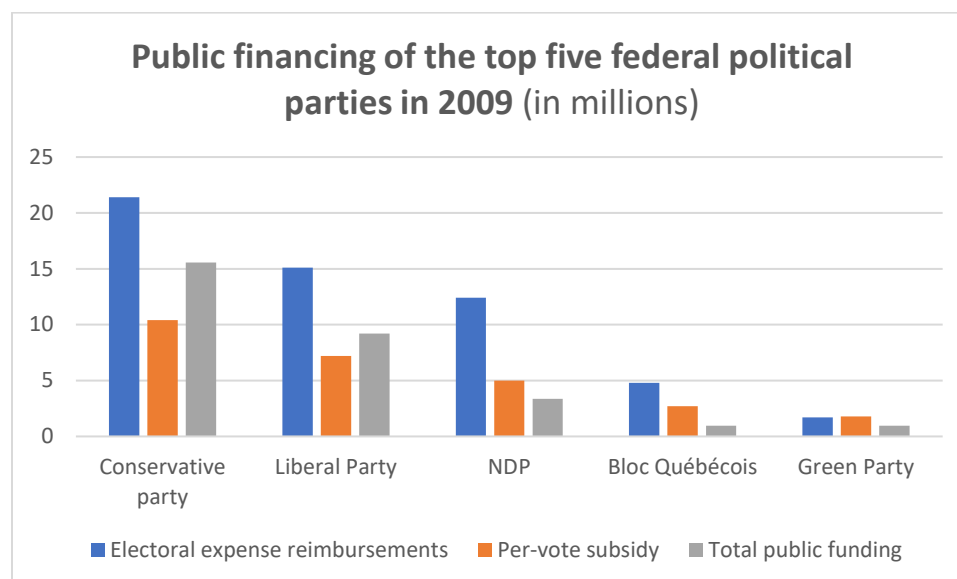
Immediately after the 2008 election, which saw another Conservative minority government come to power, Harper mandated the dissolution of the federal vote subsidy. Harper did this by tucking the elimination of the vote subsidy into a fiscal update that was designated as a confidence motion, meaning it would trigger the fall of government, and force another election

unless passed (Biro, 2010). This led to widespread outrage from the Liberals, NDP's and Greens, resulting in a coalition and ultimately the 2008 proroguing of parliament.

This determined elimination by the Conservatives and the resulting outrage from opposing parties can be understood when examining who stands to gain the most, and the least, from federal vote subsidies. Flanagan and Jansen (2008) note that the Conservatives (as well as all of their predecessor parties – The Reform, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives) have strong traditions of grassroots funding. A steady stream of donations from a well-kept membership database and subsequent fundraising from direct mail “sustainer letters”, that were later supplemented by telephone solicitation, meant that the Conservative party stands out as the least reliant on public finance with “typically only a third coming from the state” (Flanagan & Jansen, 2008:200).

Whereas other parties are much more reliant, lead by the Bloc Quebecois which up to and including 2008 derived close to 90% of its funding from the state, followed by the Liberals, Greens and NDP at approximately 65%, 60% and 50% respectively (Flanagan & Jansen, 2008). Therefore, the elimination of the public subsidy, as Biro (2010) points out, would hugely tip the scales in the Conservatives favour. The coalition was formed by the Liberals, NDP and Greens, and supported by the Bloc to vote non-confidence in the Conservatives subsidy slashing budget and it was only by proroguing parliament and hastily rolling back the proposed budget did Harper hold on to power.

Figure 5: Public Financing of the Top Five Federal Political Parties in 2009



(Tax credits approximate. Electoral expenses reimbursements include estimated riding/candidate level reimbursements.)

(Elections Canada, 2024; Grenier, 2011)

However, Harper was not to be discouraged, and in the lead up to the 2011 election he ran on the promise of cutting the per-vote subsidy. All parties were again opposed, none so much as the GPC, whose leader Elizabeth May stated that “doing so would once again concentrate influence in the hands of those with deeper pockets, instead of giving voters a voice, and she stated her belief that the 2004 campaign finance reforms that introduced the per-vote subsidy are the ‘one area we’ve gotten really right’ compared with the United States” (CBC, 2011). But winning a majority in the election meant that Harper did not need to listen to these protestations and on May 25, 2011, just three weeks after the election, the Conservatives announced that their June 6 federal budget would include the elimination of the per-vote subsidy.

With Harper’s campaign promises going into the 2011 election, the GPC set a tight budget, “approximately 2 million, compared to the 3.4 million sunk into the 2008 campaign” aware their federal funding could be cut wary and of creating debt (Harada, 2011:153). The outcome of the 2011 election perhaps reflected this, though the party was successful in getting

their leader Elizabeth May elected in the riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands, Green Votes were at “3.9% nationally 576,221 [which was] a significant drop from the 6.8% (937,613) of 2008, and [was] even below the 4.3% (582,247) they won during their initial breakthrough election in 2004” (Harada, 2011: 141). Even with the per-vote subsidy, these lower numbers drastically reduced Green Party funding, and has shuttered their efforts ever since, with numbers dropping again in the 2015 election to only 3.45 percent.

The Canadian Green party is not only unique in how it has received federal funding over the years, but also how it has decided to use this funding. In addition to hiring full time staff and putting money into advertising, a key part of the party’s professionalizing was to funnel these increased funds into a specific riding and win that riding. Though many within the Green party believed that the funding should have been split equally between all candidates, a decision was made that “given the arc of the green party's growth - claiming National Party status in 2004 with a full slate of candidates, solidifying core support in 2006 with a slight growth in popular vote - the next substantive marker of political relevance was electoral victory” (Harada, 2011:142). Therefore, the Federal Green Party used this influx of money from 2006 to 2011 to target their Leader Elizabeth May’s riding and campaign. This was dubbed “The Saanich Campaign” and is discussed in more detail in the section “Green Party of Canada Leader Elizabeth May 2006-2019 & 2022-Present” below, along with Elizabeth May’s nominations, leadership, and successes.

Voting Systems

Like Britain, Canada uses a single-member plurality (SMP) or first-past-the-post winner takes all system of voting. Similarly to Green parties abroad, this is cited as one of the major stumbling blocks for the Green party in Canada (Russow, 2000; Harada, 2004; 2006; 2008;

Seidle, 2007; Waddell, 2008; Everts & Harada, 2019) This is due to the fact that, under the SMP system, overall percentages of voter support are irrelevant as the winning party is the one which attains more votes than any other within an electoral district. Third parties, like the Greens, that have widespread and not concentrated support have little chance of being represented in parliament under this system, as was the case in 2008 when, despite having their highest number of votes in Canadian history (approximately one million), the GPC failed to elect a single MP.

The SMP system in Canada has been cited as one of the reasons for decreased voter turnout, lack of support for third parties, and strategic voting (Seidle, 2007; Milner, 2007; Belanger & Nadeau, 2010). According to Duverger's Law, the SMP system favours a two-party system as it marginalizes smaller political parties as well as geographically concentrated votes, not overall percentage. Given these two factors, the SMP system also leads to strategic voting and that idea that a vote for the Green party, even if the party best represents your beliefs, is wasted as they have little chance of winning. As mentioned previously, a per-vote subsidy combats this notion, but since its phase-out, many Canadians vote for one of the two large parties in Canada in an attempt to stop the opposition from gaining power. This is cited as the case when initial election polls show strong support for the Greens, but then dip closer to the election date, suggesting that "potential Green voters may have decided to move to the Liberals as a second best alternative that might oust the Conservatives from power, or at least keep them from winning a majority" (Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008: 281).

Given these issues with first-past-the-post, it is unsurprising that the Green party of Canada has advocated for some system of proportional representation from its inception, believing that "proportional representation will encourage voter participation as well as enable 'new parties and new ideas' to evolve" (Harada, 2004). However, the Greens are not the only

ones advocating for change. Seidle (2007) looks at various provinces that held referendums and discussions about alternatives to the SMP system, initiated by “obvious issues with SMP” such as underrepresentation of minority groups and elections resulting in the “wrong winner” – a phenomenon that occurs when the party with the second most number of votes forms government (305). The grassroots organizations, local governments and other third-party advocates who brought the discussions forward had two main focuses: fairer representation and retaining links between voters and their local members (Seidle, 2007). There was also a big focus on women’s involvement, both in the education and discussion surrounding the possible implementation of an alternative system, as well as creating a system where historically underrepresented populations were given an equal voice.

Looking at cases in BC, PEI, NB and ON, Seidle (2007) notes that some referendums were better organized than others, with some providing extensive education on voting systems and encouraging citizen involvement, while others seemed to have citizens voting in referendums for systems they did not clearly understand still. At the time of writing, in 2007, Seidle reported that the referendum in PEI and BC had failed, but was careful to point out that BC had 57% of the required 60% approval, arguing that this shows that there is an interest in change. The Green party’s ongoing insistence on switching the Canadian voting system to proportional representation is perhaps not without support then. Indeed, increasing numbers of Canadians seem to want electoral reform and advocates from all different societal groups argue that it will not only make the Canadian democracy healthier but will give power and voice to those marginalized by our current system (Harada, 2004; Seidle, 2007).

Seidle notes that “[c]omparative research demonstrates that, historically, a country’s electoral system is not radically modified or replaced very often” this no doubt is due to the fact

that, aside from radical revolt or regime change, large scale electoral changes would have to be initiated by the governing party, and given that the present system favours those currently in power, there is little chance of this happening (304). How and when countries switch to a system of proportional representation is no doubt a fascinating study, however, it is one that is beyond the scope of this project (see Pilon, 2013 for a detailed treatment of the topic). For now, it seems a long ways away as, despite vague campaign promises, it is not in the interest of the governing parties to implement change as they are the ones who directly benefit so much from our current system.

Party Competition

In comparison to Europe and Australasia, the theme of party competition and how it affects the success of the Green Party of Canada is more nuanced. Similarly to abroad, how opposing parties address the environment does affect the GPC's support, however, dissimilarly, internal party conflict is a prevalent issue as well. Infighting and disagreements within the GPC are a major reason for loss of Canadian voter support, one which is not discussed as frequently by authors examining other countries. This may simply be due to the fact that European and Australasian studies are more broad – they look at Green Parties over a longer period of time, and compare and contrast them in different countries, rather than doing an in-depth look at just one party.

Beginning with similarity, authors studying the Canadian parties also find that how competing parties respond to similar campaign issues, namely the environment, can affect voter support (Harada, 2006, 2008; Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008; Biro, 2010; Anderson & Stephenson, 2011). These authors find that environmentalism is clearly an important issue

consideration for voters when they go to the polls, and all the parties are aware of this, so they integrate this into their platforms so as not to lose votes to the GPC. Harada (2006) notes the tension between environmental concern and Canada's current system arguing that "especially in times of close races, Canadians are often motivated to vote strategically — a practice major parties encourage — and that doesn't translate into Green votes" (165)

In an examination of environmentalism and party support in Canada, Anderson and Stephenson (2011) note that in each election year they studied (2000, 2004, and 2006) all the political parties provided environmental policy ideas: "[f]rom the right-wing Canadian Alliance to the leftist NDP, each party presented a mix of ideas that addressed elements of environmentalism, such as endangered species, national parks, climate change, pollution and conservation" (345). However, Anderson and Stephenson also found that including the environment was not the only factor at play, and that voters still saw the parties on the left as best able to deal with the environment: "environmental concern helps parties on the left and centre-left and hurts those on the right" (360).

The clearest example of both phenomena is the 2008 Liberals' Green Shift plan, which was brought forward and championed by Stéphane Dion. Recognizing the growing concern in Canada surrounding the environment, "between 2000 and 2004, it appears that the Liberal party adjusted its image into a more 'environmentally friendly' party" and in 2006 Dion won the Liberal leadership by campaigning on a pro environmental agenda (Clark, Kornberg & Scotto, 2008; Biro, 2010; Anderson & Stephenson, 2011:361). This repositioning had negative consequences for the GPC as "[t]he Liberals, by incorporating the environmental issue into their centre-left program, have essentially eliminated the environment as a reason for losing votes to" the GPC (Anderson & Stephenson, 2011:361). Even though the popular vote share for the GPC

increased in the 2004, 2006 and 2008 elections, had the Liberals not worked so hard to compete for environmental votes, their share may have been much higher (Harada, 2008; Biro, 2010).

Figure 6: Summary of the Oct 14, 2008 House of Commons of Canada election Results

Party	Party Leader	Candidates	Seats					Popular vote			
			2006	Dissol.	2008	% Change	% Seats	#	# Change	%	pp Change
Conservative	Stephen Harper	307	124	127	143	+12.6%	46.4%	5,209,069	-165,002	37.65%	+1.38
Liberal	Stephane Dion	307	103	95	77	-18.9%	25.0%	3,633,185	-846,230	26.26%	-3.97
Bloc	Giles Duceppe	75	51	48	49	+2.1%	15.9%	1,379,991	-173,210	9.98%	-0.50
New Democratic	Jack Layton	308	29	30	37	+23.3%	12.0%	2,515,288	-74,309	18.18%	+0.70
Independent/No Affiliation		71	1	3	2	-33.3%	0.6%	94,844	12,984	0.69%	+0.14
Green	Elizabeth May	303	0	1	0	-100%	0	937,613	273,545	6.78%	+2.30

(Elections Canada, 2009; Parliament of Canada, 2008)

However, though statistics like the ones showed above may point to Green Party gains coming mainly from Liberal voters, this is not explicitly proven. There has yet to be a comprehensive voting study to show where the votes come from when the Green party's percentage of the popular vote increases. These could be swing voters from other parties, but they could also be previous non-voters. Additionally, voter gains could vary from election to election. When the Liberals fall out of favour, their voters could move to the Greens, but what about when the Conservatives lose large numbers – do those voters also go to the Greens? Studies in other countries, such as McGuinness's (2023) and Barber & Klassen (2021), have asked and answered this question, but such an investigation has yet to be done for Canada.

The difficulty of obtaining votes for the GPC may arise from the fact that many voters still see them as a one issue party (Paehlke, 2001; Harada, 2006). Despite having a platform that encompasses housing, fiscal responsibility, healthcare, etc., the GPC has yet to be seen as party dealing seriously with issues outside of the environment. A possible solution then is laid out by the “rainbow” green parties in Europe who have successfully integrated issues beyond ecology and marketed themselves to voters as such. The inability to do this may permanently sideline the

GPC as “other parties, established and with greater likelihoods of winning seats, advocate credible environmental policies that satisfy the demands of voters” (Anderson & Stephenson 2011:362). In addition to these external issues, an ongoing internal struggle, picked up and amplified by the media, has been shown to hinder the success and credibility of the GPC.

This internal conflict between differing members of the party has been present in the GPC since its inception. At the founding conference in 1983 Culbert (1996) notes that “things started with a heated controversy” over a press release with “bad feelings all around, [a] bad start” and Vaughan Lyon, a Trent professor attending the conference, notes that it was a “battle” over innocuous issues, with “repeated calls for the meeting to choose its own chairperson” and committee members being perceived as “exhibiting a lust for power” (1985). These domestic squabbles foreshadowed ongoing issues with the GPC, with disagreements over leadership, party funds, and technology. Harada (2006) notes that though the issues “ranged from the seemingly trivial to the more substantial”, they all spoke to an ongoing and pervasive divide between the members who wished to stick to Green grassroots political beliefs, and those who argued that gaining political ground through mainstream pragmatic political tactics was the best way to incite change (155).

These conflicts are two-part in hindering the GPC, and the first part is the media attention that the arguments garner. As the GPC began to increase their voter support, media outlets that had previously all but ignored the party began to report on their activity. However, the majority of this coverage was negative. As one author put it: “[it is] clear is that the mainstream media attention had lifted the lid of the Green Party’s Pandora’s box. The messy internal struggles that had been fought out in the past few years largely through email and online sites subsequently escaped into the larger public domain” (Harada, 2006:156). This increased negative attention

then affects the credibility of the party and consequently, their public support (Harada, 2006; 2008; 2011; Waddell, 2008).

One example of this was in 2006 when the Canada Press reported that “Elections Canada was looking into alleged federal election law violations by [then party leader] Harris after receiving a complaint from the party’s former assistant national organizer” (Harada, 2006:156). These allegations themselves were not so much the focus of media attention, but instead the tangle of claims and counterclaims made by different party members about the credibility of the allegations that were picked up by news outlets across the country and made the party look justifiably divided. Another internal incident was in 2008 with Elizabeth May’s approach to party leadership and decisions regarding party strategy. With a huge influx of money from Bill C-24, May and her team wanted to use political party tactics and concentrate party resources in “green friendly” ridings in an attempt to elect MPs in the first past the post system, which would allow them to participate in election debates. However, there was pushback from members who wanted resources to be allocated equally across all ridings. This conflict, rather than campaigning MPs or the party platform, was what media outlets focused on, painting a picture of a divided party to the Canadian voters.

This issue of funding allocation again reflected the second hindering of success for the party and an ongoing dilemma: “where does its true relevance lie, and where should it thus focus its short-term energies - on its capabilities as a nonpartisan force for change on the environmental front, or on its struggles as a political party still attempting to capture its first seat” (Harada 2008: 173). It is a conflict between fundamentalists and realists over centralization, professionalism and consensus and is not unique to the Green party in Canada. In Germany the green party (Die Grünen) faced similar issues between the Realos (realists) and Fundis (fundamentalists) that

came to a head when “real political power through coalition governance came within the Greens’ grasp, thanks to Germany’s form of proportional representation, the Realos were pushed to the fore in the nineties, and many hard-core Fundis ended up leaving the party” subsequently ending the ongoing internal conflict (Harada, 2006:163).

Authors like Harada (2006) therefore posit that to be successful the GPC needs to also make a choice, and it should be made soon: “[a]ll parties reach a point in their development where hard choices must be made, and the Greens are at that point, poised as they are on the edge of the possibility that they can become a bigger player (165). However, this was in 2006 and since then the GPC has continued to have internal issues. Additionally, with their success of 2008 and more recently 2019, with their increased success comes increased scrutiny by journalists and a continued airing of inter-party grievances. It has yet to be decided what path the GPC will take, but until they do, no doubt this conflict will remain.

Economy

In Canada, the country’s historical and contemporary position as an energy extraction state is key to the nation’s identity and economy, influencing its political decisions. With large sections of the population employed in the fields such as fishing, logging, mining or oil extraction, changes or reductions to these environmentally destructive industries has the potential to deeply affect voter identity and put them at odds with those that advocate for change (Camcastle 2007; Dalby, 2019). Canada’s location is also uniquely precarious in that it both disproportionality contributes to, and suffers from, the consequences of environmental instability, and this tension is observable in current political discourse.

So far, this discourse has taken the form of politicians from major parties only putting forward and supporting environmental policies that are economically advantageous. In the 1980s and early 1990s Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, though “taking a lead role in creating new national parks, combating acid rain and creating the Canadian Environmental Protection Act” was sure to not let this interfere with major industries, or his reputation as a “business friendly” Prime Minister (Anderson & Stephenson, 2011:345). Similarly, the Liberals, while supposedly supporting green initiatives and rhetoric, continue to approve pipelines and subsidize the oil industry and it can be argued that all governing parties have “missed or dismissed international commitments to emissions reductions” and have “failed to act in a manner that shows a genuine regard for the environment” (Paehlke, 2001; Smith, 2008:60).

There is good reason, politically, to put economy first. As elsewhere, researchers studying voting patterns in Canada agree that the economy is one of the most important factors for citizens heading to the polls (Frizzell and Pammett, 1993; Clark, Kornberg, and Scotto, 2008; LeDuc and Pammett, 2008). Politicians and political parties are of course aware of this and use their speeches, debates and party platforms to focus on the economy and their promises for improving it. LeDuc and Pammett validate this focus noting that “[i]n elections over the course of Canadian history, parties and leaders [who] have held power for substantial periods of time were often seen by voters of the ones best able to deal with the economy” (2008:297). However, given the extent to which Canada’s economy relies on the extraction of environmental assets, the economy and the idea of environmental protection and sustainability can be at odds.

The GPC has struggled with this dichotomy since its inception. Despite platforms that argue for economically advantageous environmental changes and the insistence that a transition

to green energy will create thousands of jobs and bring millions to the Canadian economy, voters still look elsewhere when the economy suffers (Harada, 2008). One jarring exception to this was the federal election of 2008. The financial collapse in the United States and then the EU was not the main issue at the beginning of the election, but, as so eloquently put by Waddell (2008): “like a summer thunderstorm approaching on the prairies the economic horizon kept getting darker and darker and the atmosphere more and more foreboding as the campaign unfolded” (218). By the last week of the election it was the only topic of interest, drowning out all others.

What is puzzling then, is that when the results came in the GPC had their highest numbers ever. Perhaps the economic implications had not reached Canada enough yet, or perhaps without the crash the GPC would have fared even better. These are important questions but lie beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, questions such as Does the Canadian Green Party benefit from any factors unique from their European and Australasian counterparts? Next, this project will discuss themes distinct from the themes already discussed.

Leaders and Debates

Election studies in Canada find a theme that diverges from the Europe and Australasia literature: the importance of party leaders. Multiple authors find that Canadians pay a great deal of attention to leaders when deciding how to vote (Clark, Kornberg and Scotto, 2008 & 2011; Leduc and Pammett, 2008; Clark et. al., 2011; Clarke and Stewart, 2019). Indeed, party leaders are the focal point for many election campaigns and Clark, Kornberg and Scotto (2008 and 2011) argue that “[p]arty leaders are preeminent figures on Canadian political stage” and that “research has established that party leader images have very important effects of voting behavior” (267). Canadians who perhaps are not as well-versed in political policy “rely heavily on their

impressions of the character and competence of party leaders for guidance” and so perhaps it is not a surprise that parties “inevitably make their leaders the centerpieces of their election campaigns” (Clarke and Stewart, 2019:226).

Given this preoccupation with what the leaders are saying and doing, it is not surprising that Canadians also rely heavily on debates when deciding how to vote. A major part of election campaigns, debates contribute to a more informed electorate, and, despite their limitations, multiple authors find that debates “constitute a perfect opportunity for voters to compare and contrast candidates’ positions and personal styles and become better informed about their vote choice” (Jamieson, 1988; Owen, 1991; Lanoue & Schrott, 1991; Turcotte, 2015: 255). Debates also showcase the party’s leaders and depending on which leader “wins” the debates, support for that party can rise or fall.

Looking through the lens of the GPC’s history, debates have been a focal point and an extremely contentious one at that. Understanding the importance and popularity of the election debates, inclusion in them has been a long-time goal of the GPC. However, being included is not as easy as simply wanting it. In 2000, when the GPC was looking to increase their credibility and visibility to the Canadian electorate, inclusion in the debates required parties to be registered and have elected members in the house. This was problematic for many third parties, not just the Greens, and was the impetus for Miguel Figueroa (leader of the Communist party) to launch his civil suit that introduced Bill C-3, as previously mentioned. However, even with this lower threshold, their widespread opposed to regionally concentrated support mean that the GPC still did not meet this requirement as they had no elected MPs.

Inclusion in the debates was therefore a major goal for the GPC in 2004 and 2006 as the “invitation alone would be the party’s passport into the mainstream” and because it would show

that their “policies and ideas deserve to be heard” (Harada, 2004: 176). For both of these elections, “[n]ewspapers and television stations refused to cover GPC candidates and the leader’s tour, claiming that GPC is not a major political party” and “the consortium of TV broadcasters and the public broadcasting system refused to allow the GPC leader to participate in the nationally televised leaders’ debates” (Camcastle, 2007:626) However, the GPC’s leader Jim Harris was able to garner media attention and public sympathy for not being included in the debates through interviews, editorials and petitions and “sympathetic headlines during a campaign are almost the equivalent of free political ad space” (Harada, 2006:150). This may be one of the reasons the party was still able to obtain a significant part of the popular vote in these years (Harada, 2006; Camcastle, 2007).

Then in 2008 independent MP Blair Wilson crossed parliament’s floor to become a member of the Green party which meant that the GPC now met the requirements to be included in national debates (Dornan, 2008; Harada, 2008). And yet, it was not as easy as that. The broadcast consortium that aired the debates refused to let the Greens participate and leaders from the NDP and Conservative party said they would not participate if then GPC leader Elizabeth May was allowed to join (Waddell, 2008; Harada, 2008). The GPC was prepared for this however and ran an aggressive media campaign that garnered widespread public support and embarrassed the parties and the consortium into changing their minds. May was a huge part of this, “telling everyone how disappointed her daughter would be that a group of men got together to prevent the only female party leader from participating with them on equal footing” which cleverly stoked public anger about her exclusion (Waddell, 2008:252).

Once included, it became clear why opposing parties did not want May at the debate table. The leader of the GPC was articulate and “looked right at home” with the other leaders and

“[i]n the end she did well...adding credibility to her party's campaign” and raising the party’s national profile (Waddell, 2008: 228; Dornan, 2008). This added credibility and the GPC’s increased profile may be one of the reasons the party saw such success in the 2008 election. As leader of the GPC, May was relatively well thought of, and Turcotte (2015) notes that “generally speaking, the winning debater stands to make a modest gain in the polls” and even without this gain, “the debates do play an important part in the course of a campaign if only “because of the massive audiences they draw” (259).

This makes sense as the GPC saw a drop in support in the 2011 election as May was not invited as the Greens had no sitting MP (Harada, 2011). Clark et. al. (2011) note that this snub may be more than the stated rational, and instead political calculations that acknowledged that, given her strong performance in the debates of 2008, May might be a detriment “to all of the other parties’ prospects” (288). At several points in the 2008 debates May had pointedly questioned Prime Minister Harper’s ability and values, and the NDP and Liberals did not want the GPC’s agenda to resonate with environmentally focused Canadians and take these potential votes from them. Politically motivated or not, May’s exclusion from the debates, and the subsequent lowered profile of the GPC may have contributed to their drop from 6.8 percent of the popular vote in 2008, to 3.91 percent in 2011.

In the 2015 federal election the correlation is less clear. May was included in two of the five campaign debates, but support for the GPC dropped again, down to 3.45 percent of the popular vote. This shows that although there is a general consensus that leaders and their inclusion and performance in debates effect voter choice, these are just some of the factors that contribute to the success of a Canadian political party, and must be taken in context with the other factors discussed in this chapter.

Green Party of Canada Leader Elizabeth May 2006-2019 & 2022-Present

It is here that this project makes a brief aside to discuss some of the details of the rise and tenure of the Green Party of Canada leader Elizabeth May. Born in 1954 in Hartford, Connecticut, May immigrated with her family to Canada as a teenager and has a history of political and environmental involvement. She worked as an environmental lawyer after her graduation from Dalhousie University, then went on to be named Senior Policy Advisor to Thomas McMillan, then-Environment Minister in the Progressive Conservative Mulroney government. She resigned on principle from the position in 1988 over permits for construction of a dam granted without environmental assessments, which were later determined to be illegal by a federal court. May then founded and served as the executive director of the Sierra Club Canada from 1989 to 2006, which is when she resigned again, this time to run for leadership of the Green Party of Canada.

May won the leadership race with 66% of the vote on the first ballot, but this was not a sign of smooth sailing to come. May was embroiled in multiple internal conflicts within the GPC revolving around the direction of the party and philosophical differences between grassroots and realist members of the party. The main debate within the party at the time was “whether building a strong central party, seeking ‘star’ candidates, and pouring resources into a few potentially winnable ridings would be betrayal of their grassroots principles” (Harada, 2011:144). This belies the unique nature of the Green Party in Canada: while other parties see no problem with professionalized single-minded strategies that focus on getting candidates elected, some within the Green party reject the idea of professionalization and insist that the party should focus on

ideology and social activism alone, and their leader needs to decide whether to accommodate this or not.

May and her team took Harada's second option, creating an election strategy that centered around funneling resources into a "winnable riding" and getting a Green MP elected – in this case May (Harada, 2006, 2011). This immediately drew internal criticism and challenges to her leadership. Many within the party were against the focus on May as leader, arguing that all Green candidates should receive support and advertisement equally. For example, shortly after her nomination, Stuart Hetzog, a party member who has contested May's nomination, "complained to the elections Canada about a National Party funding transfer to electoral district association (EDA) in Saanich-Gulf Islands, which he believed gave May an unfair advantage". Given the evidence previously discussed which highlights the importance Canadians give to party leaders, perhaps the GPC planned the support of May strategically, knowing that getting a party leader a seat would go a long way in party credibility. This remains only speculation, however, and what is concrete is the discord that this unequal allocation of funds created.

This, along with issues that "arose over Elizabeth May using an email that went to party lists to air her views on Green Party resolutions," and the party's deputy leader defecting to the Bloc Quebecois, meant that May's "work to build for the longer term was often overshadowed in the short term by bursts of bad news that affected morale and reignited simmering internal party discord" (Harada, 2011:146-147). As mentioned previously, this internal party conflict was aired in headlines and affected the credibility of the party.

However, May and her team persisted. Immediately after her election as leader May indicated that a potential winnable riding may be Cape Breton – Canso, but in the Fall of 2006 she instead ran in London North Centre finishing second to Glen Pearson of the Liberal Party.

Then for the 2008 Federal election, May chose the Nova Scotia riding of Central Nova but lost to Conservative National Defence Minister Peter MacKay. Finally, in 2010, following a survey of potentially favourable electoral districts across the country, May announced her intention to run in Saanich—Gulf Islands, in British Columbia against Conservative cabinet minister Gary Lunn. Notably, the riding of Guelph was also one of the top considered ridings for May to run in. However, the final decision was SGI, and this was the beginning of the deliberate “Saanich strategy” by the GPC (Harada, 2011).

As mentioned above, a key part of this strategy was funneling funding into the riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands, as executive director of the Greens Maureen Murphey notes “We were going to absolutely funnel financial resources into Saanich, human resources as much as possible through volunteers, and make that a focus so that we could get Elizabeth May elected” (Harada, 2011:145-146). Between the beginning of the campaign in 2010 and the election in 2011, the party had put over \$322,000 into Saanich-Gulf Islands from the national party coffers and other EDA’s (Harada, 2011). These were not just financial resources, the Greens “also reached across party lines to appeal to a wider base by branding the campaign more heavily on May than on the Green Party”, but this funneling came at a cost for the rest of the party, Jenn Hunter, the Green Candidate for Ottawa center noted that “[w]e lost about half of our national support, I think intentionally, as we invested all our resources into getting Elizabeth elected” (Harada, 2011:142). Indeed, when the results for the 2011 election came in, the Saanich Strategy had worked and May was elected in the riding, but the percentage of the vote for the GPC was at 3.9%, or 576,221 votes, which marked a notable decline from the 6.8% (937,613 votes) achieved in 2008. It was also lower than the 4.3% (582,247 votes) secured during their breakthrough election in 2004 (Harada, 2011).

Despite this drop in widespread number, Harada (2011) argues that “the Green Party can consider the 2011 election a resounding triumph” (142). They elected May to Federal parliament, meaning that she could participate in leaders debates in upcoming elections. The campaign and election were also a triumph for May personally. The public debates, challenges and scandals may have been messy, but they “ultimately enabled May and the Greens to emerge with some crucial issues - including party factionalism and confidence in her leadership – resolved” May’s reputation and national prominence was also solidified, and she created a huge reputation and became a lightening point for the party (Harada, 2011:150). Going forward, she performed well in televised Leader’s debates and went on to be named by fellow MPs as Parliamentarian of the Year 2012, Hardest Working MP in 2013, Best Orator in 2014, and Most Knowledgeable in 2020.

Though many within the party did not like her level of dominance, looking ahead, May’s importance to the party was most obvious in the inability to replace her. When May stepped down in 2019 eight candidates ran for leadership, with lawyer and activist Annamie Paul winning in 2020. However, Paul’s tenure was extremely short-lived, with a huge amount of internal party conflict and the new leader stepping down in 2021 after coming in fourth in her own riding in the 2021 Canadian Federal Election. To even further prove her importance, in the leadership race to replace Paul, May ran again and won, although this time with human rights activist Jonathan Pedneault as her co-leader. Given the importance Canadians give to party leaders, it is not surprising that the Green party made the decision to focus both human and financial resources on their leader Elizabeth May, and for better or worse, as a leader May has had a huge impact on the Federal green party and contemporary Canadian politics.

Environmental Event/Social Movement

Unlike in the EU and Australasia, research into Canada's Green Party does not find any evidence that a specific environmental event or social movement led to its formation. This is not to say that there were no such movements in Canada at the time. Though authors and activists have long discussed the importance of nature, the modern green movement started in Canada the same time it started globally – in the 1960's. Though, as mentioned previously, the sixties Canadian movements were less nuclear focused than their European counterparts, there was still a strong counter-culture movement which was firmly environmentally focused and was the first mass rejection of consumer culture.

Though there was a decline of many grassroots movements at the end of the sixties, this environmental counterculture continued into the seventies in the form of isolated, small-scale enterprises such as health food stores, women's and environmental groups, renewable energy programs, and organic farms. Green movements worked to build within communities, shed their reputations as transient and unessential enterprises, and have structure and an economic base. By the 1980's, this small-scale approach was not enough for many activists, and "dissatisfied with the impotence of isolated activities and opinions, attempts were made to further organize the green movement into coalitions" (Green Party of Canada, 2025). Therefore, it was during this decade that organizations and coalitions like the Canadian Environment Network, the Canadian Organic Growers, the Canadian Peace Alliance, the Voice of Women, the Solar Energy Society of Canada, and many others were founded.

Since then, Canada has become home to even more environmental organizations, like the Sierra Club and Greenpeace, and though their ideologies and memberships may align, none are cited to be the impetus for the formation of the GPC. The closest Canada comes to this link is

that the first coalition of 11 candidates running in Atlantic provinces under the name “small party” that would eventually form the GPC called for the transition to a non-nuclear conserving society, but other than that no specific social or environmental movement could be argued to have given rise to the GPC (Culbert, 1996).

Though the formation of the GPC in 1984 coincided with a time where large protests about nuclear energy were happening across Europe, and though there have been various movements since the 50s surrounding the environment and nuclear energy, there is no one event that authors cite spurring the decision to form a political party. Instead, the small parties that ran in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan had an “ecologically-oriented” approach to politics and when forming their principles, drew them from previously formed Green parties abroad (Culbert, 1996).

Populism

Once again we look at the Canadian literature and themes of emergence and success of its federal Green party through the lens of populism. Similarly to those studying Green party politics in EU and Australasia, researchers discussing the GPC do not expressly mention populism as a factor to their emergence or success. However, when we look between the lines of the literature, much can be discussed in regard to how populism and green party rhetoric do or do not coincide.

A brief overview of populism in Canada reveals that it has roots in the country that extend back over a century. Agrarian collectives, as well as urban movements driven by poor working conditions and labour uncertainty, created populist movements that challenged the elites of Montreal and Toronto (Gillies et al., 2020). These movements found political representation in

parties like the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the United Farmer's Party (UFP), and Social Credit which, though no longer around, have undercurrents in the present-day New Democratic Party (NDP). The Reform Party, formed in 1987, was grounded in right-wing populist ideology and driven by the western alienation felt by voters in the western most provinces in Canada. Other parties, like the Bloc Quebecois (BQ), though not inherently populist, have used populist rhetoric around particular policies or grievances with the government as well. Gillies (2020) notes that all these political movements "share a common anti-elitist sentiment. But the similarities stop there" – left wing populists attack the elite when things like worker's rights are threatened, while right-wing populists call for "common sense" solutions and blame establishment policies that deal with immigration and expand rights (87).

In more recent history populism was temporarily relegated to the sidelines, with the major parties avoiding populist appeals throughout the early 2000s. However, in the final weeks of the 2015 federal election, in what Gillies (2020) called "divisive populist desperation", Harper decided to bring into question the religious tradition of niqab coverings, asking if they "fit with Canadian values" (89, 88). Though this backfired on Harper, with Justin Trudeau winning the 2015 election, the following years saw populism re-emerge with vigor globally. Brexit in the UK, Trump's populist campaign in the United States, and populist backlash in almost all European countries due to over a million refugees fleeing the Syrian war crisis.

Canada was not immune to this turn: in 2018 Doug Ford won Ontario's provincial election on a populist platform, in Quebec in 2018 "Francois Legault and the CAQ won a massive majority government in 2018 as a centre-right soft-sovereigntist party with populist tendencies"; in New Brunswick "an Anglophone based right wing party called the People's Alliance led by Kris Austin "won enough seats to partner with Progressive Conservatives to form

the official opposition”; and in Alberta in 2019, Conservative leader Jason Kenney made repeated populist appeals to voters and won in an electoral landslide (Gillies et al., 2020, pp. 89, 91).

Since “in recent years, labour and social policy activists have split their support between the NDP and the federal and various provincial Green parties” this populist turn could have potentially been harnessed by the Green Party of Canada (Gillies et al., 2020:86). Gillies (2020) observes that this is because the Green Party of Canada has historically maintained a strong activist and populist grassroots orientation. Additionally, while the New Democratic Party once held the populist left space in national politics—particularly on issues like labour, the environment, and economic justice—this began to shift after the passing of Jack Layton, leaving some of those populist voices without full representation in the party.

However, Gillies goes on to argue that instead of jumping on this opportunity, the federal Greens’ “campaign seemed to eschew its activist wing and play for the middle of the road voter” leading to a “fragmentation politically of the progressive left between the NDP and the Greens” (90-91). This also made space for the federal Liberal Party to “rhetorically claim left wing issues such as environmental and Indigenous social justice,” at least in 2015 (90). By the time the 2019 election has been called, Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau had failed to deliver on his two signature issues and so no one, not the Greens, the NDP not the Liberals was able to “claim the mantle and harness left wing populism” (90). The result was that “in an era of widespread environmental protests, as well as Indigenous activism on a large scale, the Greens were incapable of managing this populism”, and 2019 led to a minority Liberal government and no significant victories for the Green Party of Canada (91).

The Green Party of Canada and its success therefore adheres to, and departs from, Green parties abroad in important ways. Though Canada has a rich history of environmental and social protests, the literature gave no indication that the Federal party was formed as a direct result of a specific social movement. Different as well is the role of party leaders and campaign debates, with Canadians putting much more stock in these two factors than any literature from international Green Parties suggests. Additionally, the factors and fallout of internal party conflict was shown to have a large role in the success of the GPC, a consideration that authors studying Green Parties in Europe and Australasia did not mention. Finally, the role of the economy in Canada, is more complicated, and this study find inconclusive results on its direct effect on the Canadian Federal Green party.

In terms of similarities, this review of Canadian literature found that the themes of post-materialism, party funding, voting systems, and external party competition are similar to what the international literature. Now this project turns to an analysis of the Provincial Green Party of Ontario to once again examine and determine the province's history, the provincial party's history and how the six central themes in this study apply.

Green Party in Ontario

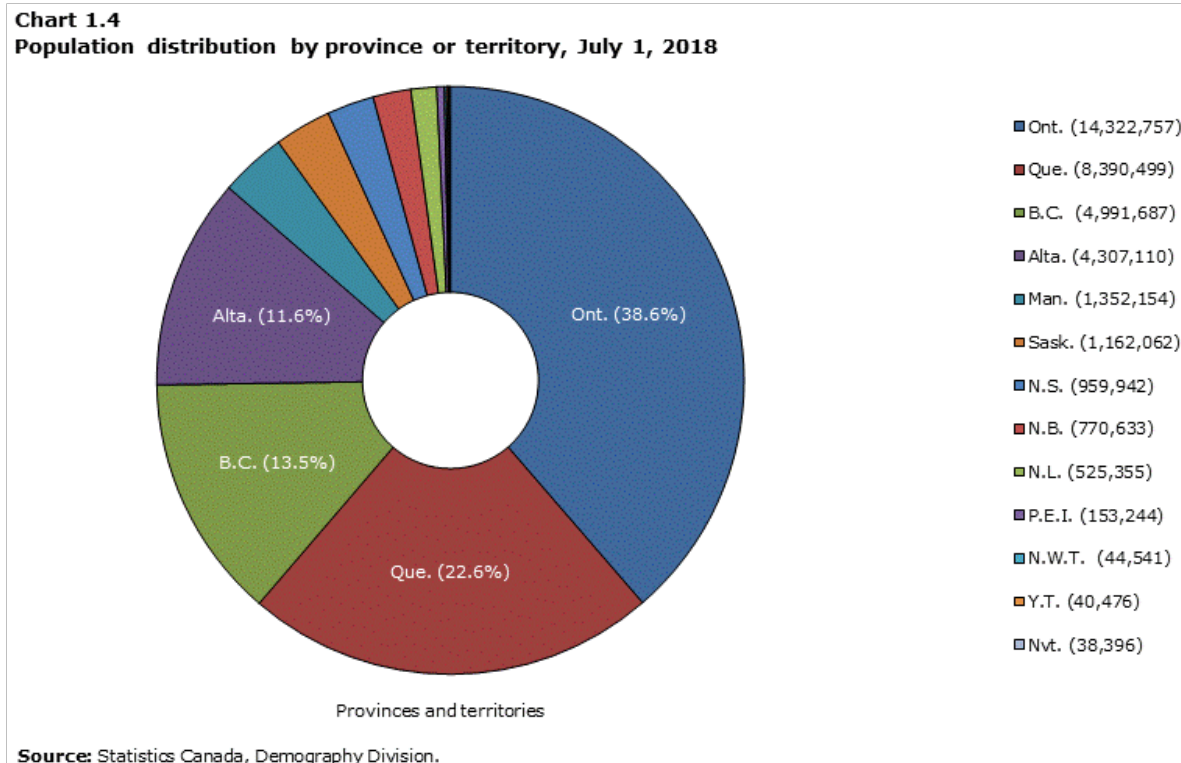
To begin, this section on Ontario must provide a bit more background into the province as this is where the Green party anomaly happened, and as this is the focal point of this research. A similar, even more specific approach is taken in the next chapter about the city of Guelph. First the demography of the province will be examined, followed by the history of the economy and main industries of Ontario. Then a general overview of the politics of the province will be

reviewed, which will then be subsequently narrowed down to a history of the Green Party in Ontario. All of this is to provide context for and connections to the themes of this project.

The province of Ontario is located in the middle-eastern part of Canada. It is bordered by the province of Manitoba to the west, Hudson's Bay and Quebec to the north and east, and the Great Lakes to the south. In terms of square acreage, it is second only to Quebec in size³, but it is by far Canada's most populous province with a population of 14.32 million in 2018 (StatsCan). Ontario is home to Canada's capital city and centre for government, Ottawa, and its most populous city, Toronto. The province is divided into two major regions – the northern Boreal Shield and the much more populous southern Great Lakes and Saint Lawrence lowlands. Historically, these regions were defined by their economy, with the north primarily characterized by resource extraction – most commonly forestry and mining – and the south by agriculture due to its fertile farming conditions. The southern region was also where the majority of manufacturing – an economy that defined Ontario for many decades – occurred, but recent changes are seeing this business slowly transition to that of a service industry.

³ Ontario is actually the third largest province in terms of land, but because it contains so much water, it is only slightly bigger than British Columbia in total area.

Figure 7: Population Distribution by Province or Territory, July 1, 2018



With such a large population comes the importance of demographics. Though Ontario's population has grown significantly, due to a substantial decline in natural increase, this growth can be attributed to both international and national immigration. In fact, as recently as 2001-2, Ontario had far more immigrations than births, and although this is no longer the case: "according to the 2021 Census, 4,206,585 people, that is, 30.0% of the population, were foreign-born (immigrants), 9,437,320 (67.3%) were Canadian-born (non-immigrants) and 387,850 (2.8%) were non-permanent residents" (White, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2022). Most of this population can be found in urban areas, leading to incredibly diverse city centres; the 2021 Canadian census showed that 46.6 percent of all recent immigrants settled in the Greater Toronto Area. This has led to a diversified religious makeup of the province as well, but one that is changing. In 2011, the majority of Ontarians were Catholic (31 percent), followed by 23 percent claiming no religious affiliation and, reflecting the recent changes in cultural makeup, Statistics

Canada's 2011 National Household Survey found that Ontario was home to nearly twice as many Muslims as Presbyterians (581,950 to 319,585) (StatsCan). Contrast this to 2021: now the majority of Ontarians claim no religious affiliation (31.6 percent) and Catholicism has fallen to second place at 26 percent (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

In 2014, the economy of Ontario made up 36.7 percent of Canada's GDP and, as mentioned previously, though the majority of this used to be from natural resource extraction, agriculture and manufacturing, there have been significant changes in recent years. The biggest shift has been in manufacturing. Though the industry still is important to the Ontario economy, it has been in decline for decades, with a more recent plummet from 1997 to 2014, where its GDP share fell from 22.3 to 13 percent (White, 2017). Consequently, employment in manufacturing has also fallen – “over the past decade, Ontario has lost more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs, the vast majority in the unionized auto, steel, and forest industries” – leading to a deterioration of the once powerful machinist, autoworker and steelworker unions (Peters, 2018:43). Multiple labour theorists have argued that this has led to weakening of regulations and an increase in both temporary work and job precarity for workers (Peters, 2018; Savage, 2017; Baccaro and Howell 2017; Brady 2009).

In response to the decline of the manufacturing sector, the Canadian and Ontario governments, like many other advanced industrial countries in the early 1990s, sought to revitalize the economy through “financial deregulation, low interest rates, and support for housing markets” (Peters, 2018:43). This has led to a boom in the information technology, biotechnology industries and has created over one million jobs in finance, business, and insurance, with these new productions being financed by new venture capital, pension funds, and thriving stock markets (Peters, 2018). However, this success was, and continues to be, limited to

a select few Ontarians – as Peters (2018) notes, “the average annual salary among the hundreds of thousands of nonstandard employees was less than \$23,000 in 2011” which means the majority of this new wealth goes to a very small percentage, widening the gap between the rich and poor. This gap, coupled with a declining number of unions, has increased inequality and poverty and without the union power and political leverage makes it far less likely that the government will do anything to counteract these issues (Peters, 2018).

Given its geographic, economic, political and cultural dominance and centrality, Ontario has historically always been at the centre of the federation, and the province rarely felt itself to be distinct from the state of Canada and therefore it was generally understood that what was good for Ontario was good for Canada and vice-versa (Cameron & Simeon, 1997). However, with the recent economic changes, in the province, namely the downturn, as well as changes in politics, Ontarians have begun to see themselves as distinct and separate from other regions of Canada. Cameron and Simeon (1997) note that around the 2010s Ontario realized that its “interests no longer necessarily coincide with those of Ottawa; and that Ontario has its own grievances to pursue, and its own interests to defend” (159).

Ontario’s political history since World War II can be divided into two main eras: up to 1985 and 1985 to present. Up until 1985, Ontario had a relatively stable voter base that was defined by partisanship and minority Conservative rule – they controlled Ontario from 1943 to 1985, nicknamed “The Big Blue Machine” and giving the province a reputation of electoral stability and governmental longevity. As Morton noted, “Scholars have consistently argued that - in contrast to the saga of provincial electoral politics in most other provinces - Ontario provincial party politics have been, with infrequent exceptions, remarkably predictable, bland, and unchanging” (Morton 1997:233). However, paradoxically, this reputation owes a lot to the high

degree of competitiveness in the province. Despite their long reign, the PC party “never received a majority of votes cast, despite sometimes holding an overwhelming legislative majority” and during this first era, “no party has secured support from a majority of the electorate, and since 1967, none of the three main parties has fallen below 20% of the popular vote” meaning that victory was never secure, but never out of reach for opposition parties either (Woolstencroft, 2017:65; Morton, 1997).

Figure 8: Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (1943-1981) - seats won by party

Government	Progressive Conservative											
Party	1943	1945	1948	1951	1955	1959	1963	1967	1971	1975	1977	1981
Progressive Conservative	38	66	53	79	83	71	77	69	78	51	58	70
Co-operative Commonwealth	34	8	21	2	3	5						
New Democratic Party							7	20	19	38	33	21
Liberal	15	11	13	7	10	21	23	27	20	35	34	34
Liberal-Labour		3	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		
Labour-Progressive	2	2	2	1								
Liberal Independent	1											
PC Independent					1							
Total	90	90	90	90	98	98	108	117	117	125	125	125

After 1985 came a rapid cycling of the main three parties, with the Liberals gaining office in 1985, the NDP in 1990 and the Conservatives coming back in 1995. This swift rotation spoke of a restlessness in the Ontario electorate. However, as Malloy (2017) notes, the lack of emergence of a new party during this time showed that Ontario voters found sufficient choice within their three-party system, “no other party has won a legislative seat since 1951... and only one independent MPP has been elected since the 1930s - former New Democrat Peter North in 1995” (Williams, 1997; Malloy, 2017:194). What distinguishes Ontario’s party system in this circumstance is that the rise of the NDP to a majority government also occurred without the displacement, disappearance, or dissolution of one or more of the other parties. The three-party

system remains resilient: it has fended off all newcomers while at the same time no two parties managed to squeeze a third into obscurity.

Figure 9: Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (1985-2018) - seats won by party

Government	Liberal		NDP	PC	PC	Liberal				PC	PC
Party	1985	1987	1990	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011	2014	2018	2022
Progressive Conservative	52	16	20	82	59	24	26	37	28	76	83
New Democratic Party	25	19	74	17	9	7	10	17	21	40	31
Liberal	48	95	36	30	35	72	71	53	58	7	8
Green										1	1
Total	125	130	130	130	103	103	107	107	107	124	124

The partisanship of the past has not returned, however, and voters seem to be swayed by campaign tactics, media orchestrations, and bandwagon effects, meaning that the major Ontario political parties can no longer count on long-term allegiance, but instead must convince a large floating vote that they best reflect their social, economic, or demographic interests. This advent of instability gives rise to conditions that are favourable for other parties to potentially capture this floating voter base as voters seem to make up their minds afresh about who or what to support at each election. The Green party, though historically on the margins, has capitalized on this instability to obtain up to 8% of the popular vote in Ontario, showing that there is a potential for them to gain support. To be able to ascertain if this success is possible and sustainable, however, it is necessary to evaluate the GPO success according to the previously discussed themes of Green party success elsewhere.

Ontario Themes

When examining Green party success in the province of Ontario, several issues arise. The first and most pressing of these is that, even as recently as 2017, the Green Party of Ontario

(GPO) is barely mentioned. Analysts examining Ontario's political culture, voting patterns, political history and parties relegate the Green party to all but a footnote, and there is definitely no literature devoted to it entirely. There is an argument that this is warranted: though the party was formed in 1983, they were unable to elect an MPP until Mike Schreiner's win in Guelph in 2018, and though they have reached up to 8% of the popular vote (such as in 2007), this support is not reliable nor steady (Winfield, 2012). Authors that do mention the Green party (such as Collier, 2017 and Malloy, 2017), mainly just note these percentages, and at most, like Brown and Kay (2010) may note that this lack of support means the GPO is shut out of campaign aspects such as the debates or media coverage.

Another divergence from previous literature is a lack of discussion as to why parties are successful or are formed. At least in recent literature, the three-party dominance of the NDP, Liberals and PCs are taken for granted, with very little comprehensive discussion surrounding themes or reasons for their success. This may be due to the prominence of the federal parties: as Woolstencroft (2017) notes, voter attention can be much more centred on federal politics, with provincial only coming as an afterthought or not at all.

Finally, due to this lack of attention to formation and success, the themes that were so clearly identified in the global and federal arena are much less evident. A discussion of the formation of Ontario political parties and specifically how social events, post materialism, and funding contribute to their success is mostly absent. Instead, Ontario research focuses on changing demographics, labour issues, the economy etc., instead of focusing on the parties themselves. There are perhaps several reasons for this: once again a focus on the pre-eminence of the federal parties leading to an assumption that their provincial counterparts are successful for the same reasons; the tendency for provincial parties to mostly adhere to the centre of the

political spectrum leading to no obvious differences in the reasons for their success; or, given their longstanding success and lack of new parties, the status quo remains unremarkable.

However, all is not lost for the study of the GPO, for if one takes the time to read between the lines on the various examinations of Ontario politics one can begin to see some of the old themes emerge, along with some new ones. Of course, these themes are not in reference to the GPO, they are discussed in regard to the main three parties, but they can be related to the GPO.

Post Materialism

The first of these is the presence of post-materialism as ascertained through the demographic differences of Ontario voters and what affect this has on the success of provincial parties. Given Ontario's educational and economic prosperity in the already solidly post-materialist nation of Canada, observations about this theme are similar to those nationally and abroad (see, for example, Camcastle, 2007; Eckersley, 1989; Rüdiger et al., 1991; Vromen, 2005). Brown and Kay (2010) posit that there is "considerable evidence that environmental movements and Green parties globally" attract a "new class" or "new middle class" made up of individuals who are "younger, much better educated, financially secure (but not wealthy) and from student and professional occupations" (58). Winfield (2017) also notes that younger, progressive, and urban voters tend to vote Green or NDP when not compelled by strategic voting to do otherwise. He also noted that the third wave of increased public concern for the environment in Ontario from 2004-2007 coincided with a shift in demographics to a much "younger and geographically distributed cohort from the distinctly urban 416, high education, high income, 55 plus profile" (Winfield, 2017:152).

However, this begs the question: if Ontario is so prominently a post-materialist province, why is the support for the GPO not higher? As was the case with the national party, this could be for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the presence of post-materialism is just one factor, and though it sets the stage for potential Green party support, it takes many other things to guarantee success. Secondly, the GPO is again a relatively new party, only formed in 1983, which was over a century after the Liberal Party (1857) and the Progressive Conservatives (1854), and lags 50 years behind the CCF (1932) (which transformed into the NDP in 1961).

Economy

The second most prominent theme is the economy. As with elsewhere, the importance of the economy is stark in Ontario, taking precedence over the environment in almost all instances. This prominence is exemplified by Winfield (2012) who discusses the dichotomy between support for environmental policy and the economy in his book *Blue-Green Province: Environment and the Political Economy of Ontario* and notes that in years where concern for the economy increases, support for environmental policy and action decreases. Winfield (2012) notes that “the potential electoral benefits and risks associated with government action or inaction during periods of high public salience of an issue can counterbalance the normally dominant structural power of business interest relative to civil society organizations” (4-5).

Though Winfield (2012) used this rubric to explain the implementation (or lack thereof) of environmental policy by the main parties in Ontario, given that various studies have shown that increased environmental concern and decreased concern for the economy has led to increased support for Green parties (Beaudonnet and Vasilopoulos, 2013; Kayser and Grafström, 2016; Abou-Chadi, Tarik, and Kayser, 2017), we can assume the same to be true in the case of

Ontario. Indeed, Winfield (2012, 2017) identifies the important relationship between “the changing levels of societal concern for the environment and the shifting conceptions of the appropriate roles of government relation to the provinces economy, society, and environment” (3), and notes that there have been three periods of heightened public concern for the environment in Ontario’s recent history (from the late 1960s to mid-1970s, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, and most recently from 2004 to 2008) and during those periods not only did the governing party implement environmental policy, but in the most recent wave, support for the GPO increased (StatsCan).

As with the Canadian literature, it is also important to note that any time a political party in Ontario mentions environmental policy or changes, they do so within the lens of economic prosperity (Winfield, 2012; 2017). For example, even during the seemingly progressive 1970s Davis government, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment continuously adopted an approach that gives overall priority to facilitating economic development, such as when air and water quality guidelines were formed on the basis of minimizing the potential economic impact on the affected facilities. More recently, the Ontario Liberal party’s 2011 Green Energy Act emphasized jobs as the premier benefit to this act, showing that provincial governments are well aware of the referential relationship between the economy and the environment.

Voting Systems

Another theme that can be extracted from the political literature of Ontario is the effect of the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system. Like the federal system in Canada, Ontario has used a single member plurality system since confederation, and this has been identified as a major roadblock not just for the GPO but for all new and small parties (Harada, 2004; 2006;

2008; Waddell, 2008; Everts & Harada, 2019). This may be why, as Malloy (2017) notes, the same three parties – the Liberals, PCs and NDP – have dominated the Ontario political landscape and remained remarkably resilient for decades: “They have fended off all net newcomers [and] neither have two parties managed to squeeze a third into obscurity” (192).

The FPTP system in Ontario, just like the federal system, also punishes parties with relatively even geographic distribution of votes. This means that, despite the GPO gaining up to 8% of the popular vote in past provincial elections, this did not translate into any seats (Winfield, 2012). Closely following a similar initiative in British Columbia, in 2007 Ontario held a referendum on switching the FPTP system to a mixed-member proportional system similar to the one used in Aotearoa New Zealand. This move was officially endorsed by both the NDP and the Greens as it would have greatly improved their chances of winning seats in the legislature in the future. However, the motion was roundly defeated by a margin of almost two to one among the votes cast, this was attributed to lack of education around the process, whereas in contrast BC voters came very close to approving changes to a single transferable vote system, demonstrating the difference between voter opinion and initiative education between the provinces (Winfield, 2012; Malloy, 2017). And, as noted previously, first-past-the-post is not an absolute barrier to Green representation, as positive provincial results for Greens in PEI, New Brunswick, Ontario and BC in the period since 2013 make clear (Pilon, 2024).

Party Competition

Another theme that can be extracted from discussions about parties other than the Greens is the importance of party competition. One of the most prominent sources to do this with is again with Winfield’s book *Blue-Green Province* (2012), where he traces the history of

environmental policy in Ontario, from the mid-80s to 2011. Though the Green party of Ontario is not prominent and rarely mentioned, the history of environmental policy implementation in Ontario and the theme of party competition can actually explain why. Winfield notes that up until the 1990s, the Liberal, NDP and even the PC governments had comprehensive and highly publicized environmental policies in their platforms – though he notes that on the part of the PCs this was mostly reactive and due to either high environmental concern, or the timing of highly publicized environmental disasters like the contaminated drinking water debacle in Walkerton, ON⁴. This meant that Ontario voters who had high levels of concern for environmental issues were placated by the platforms and policies of the mainstream parties, leaving no gap for the GPO to fill. As for internal party competition and the negative effects of infighting on party support, this is discussed, but again, only in reference to the mainstream parties, making it impossible to determine if this had an effect of the success of the GPO.

Both the FPTP system and party competition in Ontario lend to a tradition of strategic voting which further marginalizes small parties like the Greens. Blais and Turgeon (2004) define strategic voting as when “voters decide to vote for a candidate or party that is not their most preferred because their first choice is perceived to have no chance of winning. A strategic vote is therefore a vote cast on the basis not only of preferences but also of expectations about the outcome of the election” (455). However, the opposite can also be true, leading to support for smaller parties when a main party has a clear lead or loss. Winfield (2012) noted that this occurred in the 2003 provincial election, where the “likelihood of a PC defeat reduced the appeal

⁴ In May 2000, the small town of Walkerton’s drinking water was contaminated by *Escherichia coli* O157: H7 bacteria, a strain of *E. coli*. As a result, seven people died and nearly half of the town’s population of 4,800 became seriously ill. An inquiry ordered to look into the event found that ministers of the Environment, cabinet and government caucus had been repeatedly warned the environmental cuts could be harmful, and in 2002 the report found that the disaster could have been prevented.

of strategic voting in the direction of the Liberals among progressive voters,” resulting in an increase of popular vote share for both the NDP and the GPO (157).

In an interesting doubling back effect, this strategic voting is compounded again by party competition – when a major party sees votes going to a party like the Greens, they may update their platforms to include the main points of this competitive party. An example of this was the Liberal party in the 2011 provincial election where, perhaps responding to the amount of support the Green party had received in the 2007 election, the Liberals increased their emphasis on their green energy act, allowing voters who would have perhaps supported the Greens based on environmental concern to stick to a larger party who had a better chance of winning. This co-opting of the green platform may have contributed to how Green Party support collapsed, with the party receiving less than 3% of the popular vote and, at 127,000 votes, little more than a third of the total vote had received in 2007.

Funding

Political parties in Ontario receive annual government funding in the form of a quarterly allowance as determined by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). This allowance is “payable to a registered party whose candidates in the last election before the current quarter received at least: two per cent of the number of valid votes cast; or five per cent of the number of valid votes cast in the electoral districts in which the registered party endorsed a candidate” (Elections Ontario, 2023b). The amount of money given for the quarterly allowance is “calculated by multiplying the quarterly rate by the number of valid votes a party’s candidates received in the previous general election” (Elections Ontario, 2023b). The Green party of Ontario therefore does

receive guaranteed funding if they meet these criteria, but the amounts, which will be extrapolated on in later chapters, are far lower than opposing Ontario parties.

New Theme - Neoliberalism

As with the literature about Canada, the specific political culture of Ontario produces new, unique themes. The most prominent of these is the rise of neoliberalism in the political sphere. Neoliberalism is not unique to only Ontario; indeed, multiple scholars have traced its rise in almost all facets of the modern world, but when studying political parties in Ontario, it is discussed in a way that is absent from the literature of Canada and abroad. There are several titles discussing neoliberalism specifically in the context of Ontario. Books like *Neoliberal Parliamentarism: The Decline of Parliament at the Ontario Legislature* by Tom McDowell (2021) or *Divided Province: Ontario Politics in the age of Neoliberalism*, by Greg Albo and Brian M. Evans (2018), papers such as “Ontario Political Parties in the neoliberal age,” by Robert MacDermid (2018), and book chapters like “A Neoliberal pause? The auto and manufacturing sectors in Ontario since free trade,” by Dimitri Anastakis (2018), showing that neoliberalism is a significant factor in the political system and culture of the province.

Though Albo (2018) notes that “no political jurisdiction in Canada has withstood the neoliberal transformation of its policy regime,” the focus on Ontario’s shift to neoliberalism is perhaps so pronounced in political culture due to its history as Canada’s manufacturing centre – especially its auto industry – and the decline of that centre. Once the undisputed economic engine of Canada, Ontario manufacturing has “faced a dramatic decline since the turn of the century, and especially since 2010” (Anastakis, 2018:103). This, along with global industrial restructuring, new trade regimes, and recessions from the 1970s to the 1990s, resulted in

provincial policy moving away from direct social provisioning and toward developing co-operation between labour, business, and the government to improve the competitiveness of Ontario's industry.

As mentioned previously, this has reduced the number of unions, consequently reducing the power of collective action, social support and government responsibility to workers, all of which have fallen to privatization, austerity, and the reduction of state influence which are the tenets of neoliberalism (Savage, 2017).

Though the influence of neoliberal policy was beginning to creep into Ontario politics as early as the late 1980s, the height of this neoliberal restructuring was during Mike Harris and Ernie Eves Ontario Progressive Conservative's Common Sense Revolution in the 1990s, where the party aggressively axed public provisioning and tax cuts and mainlined bureaucratic rationalization and privatization. As Fantauzzi (2022) discusses, these processes largely continued until 2018 under the Liberal Parties of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, including the wide-scale adoption of privatization by way of public-private partnerships – albeit with modest periodic investments into education and health. Overall, neoliberalism in Ontario has been focused on remaking the provincial bureaucracy into privatized marketable corporation with an intensification of market relations and an individual competition throughout society.

Though no authors have yet to connect this directly to the success or lack thereof of the GPO, given that the central tenants of neoliberalism – individuality, privatization, reduction of social provisioning, etc. – contrast sharply with those of the GPO, the rise of neoliberalism does not bode well for the party. This, and the fact that many environmental protections rely on direct government curtailing of individual and business powers, means that any future success the party may have will have to be despite this shift in political culture.

Populism (and Doug Ford's Conservatives) in Ontario

Until recently, the province of Ontario has not had an overly prevalent history of populism and its ideology within its elected officials, but small examples can be seen. One of the very first of these examples in the province was Premier Mitchell Hepburn in the 1930's, whose Liberal party adopted populist strategies to unite rural and urban voters (Glassford, 2003). Hepburn's administration emphasized anti-elitist rhetoric and opposed organized labor, ideas which Hepburn may have acquired from his time as a member of the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO) before he switched to the Liberal Party (Glassford, 2003). Moving into the 21st century, Ontario also saw populist rhetoric in one of its major metropolitan areas with Rob Ford's tenure as Toronto's mayor from 2010-2014. This was marked as a significant urban populist movement, and Rob Ford played on populism's anti-establishment rhetoric and promised to reduce government waste and increase fiscal conservatism to appeal to voters (Lachapelle & Kiss, 2019).

Where populism in Ontario does find its prevalence is with its current Premier Doug Ford. Brother to the aforementioned Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, Doug Ford also began his political career in Toronto, as a city councillor from 2010 to 2014. However, it was in 2018, the same election year in which Mike Schreiner and the Green party of Ontario had their victory in Guelph, that Doug Ford ran for Premier of Ontario as Leader of the Conservative Party and won. Evans and Fanelli (2025) note that many argued that "Ford's win signalled the arrival of Trump-style populism in Canada's most populous province", but these authors and others argued that Ford's populism was more nuanced than that (Budd, 2020; Forde, 2022; 8).

In their discussion of Ford Nation populism, Evans and Fanelli (2025) argue that “while sharing certain similarities - extreme wealth, hostility towards the press, combative rallies and anti-establishment diatribes - Ford did not share, at least on the surface, the racial intolerance, paranoia and anti-immigrant sentiment that predominated the populist movements in Turkey, Italy, the Philippines, US and elsewhere” (8). For example, paralleling the “United Farmers and Maritimes rights movements, Social Credit, the Reform Party and even the CCF” the Ford government used populist rhetoric with its rallying cry against the “gravy train” of bloated government and its split between average folks versus the “fat cats” (Evans and Fanelli, 2025:8). However, Evans and Fanelli (2025), go on to note that what “distinguishes Ford’s populism is its diversity, which includes a multiplicity of racialized groups, immigrants and religious denominations”, and this may have been the key to his success (9).

Budd (2020) echoes this sentiment, arguing that though Ford’s Conservative campaign emphasized tax cuts, reduced government intervention, and opposition to perceived elites, it lacked the nativist elements seen in other global movements. Because of this, he was able to appeal to people of different age, race, religious, sex, etc. by mobilizing their individualized experiences. For example, Lewson explains “he doesn’t deny the existence of climate change but insists that working people shouldn’t be made to pay for ambitious carbon reduction schemes” (2020). Ford’s appeal seems, therefore, to go hand in hand, or perhaps even benefit from, the already strong individualistic drive of neoliberalism in the province. Indeed, Kelpin (2024) argues that Ford’s populism is inseparable from neoliberal austerity.

The biggest challenge for the Green Party of Ontario in the face of populism was that they needed to navigate a political terrain where populist anti-tax sentiment could eclipse environmental messaging, especially around policies such as carbon pricing which could easily

be framed as costly. By not denying climate change but arguing that the people of Ontario should not be the ones to pay for it, Ford was able to harness the appeal of populism without alienating those who care about the climate. Lachapelle and Kiss (2019) support this as well, analyzing how populist discourses fueled public resistance to carbon pricing in the lead-up to the 2018 election, and linking these dynamics to anti-climate policy sentiment that may have hurt Ontario Green party support. Considering the political climate of populism in Ontario at the time, it seems like it would be very difficult for the Greens to make any headway, yet Guelph in 2018 did just that. Why did a Green MPP succeed in Guelph in 2018? Taking a closer look at the city itself, may provide some answers.

Chapter 4: Setting the Scene – The Rise of Green Politics in Guelph

Introduction

It was important to lay the groundwork for this study by assessing Guelph, Ontario in the context of the broader international Green Party presence. To this end I reviewed comparative explanations of Green Party emergence in other western countries and elsewhere in Canada. Now, however, this chapter consists of an examination of the political, economic and institutional history of Guelph that will provide a prelude before diving into the more in-depth context and specific political factors affecting the 2018 provincial election in the city. This examination will therefore seek to offer the best explanation about why a Green MPP in was elected in Guelph, specifically, why Guelph, and why at the time it occurred. It is a chance to assess the locale as a distinct, or not so distinct, context in terms of the broad themes found when the comparative work on Green Party emergence was assessed. In other words, to what extent is Guelph as a context in any way crucial to the emergence of Greens there, if at all?

This chapter delves into Guelph to explore the previously discovered themes to help rule in or rule out Guelph as being distinct in terms of these pro-Green Party variables that were highlighted from Europe, Australasia, and elsewhere in Canada. These variables – post-materialism, economy, voting systems, party competition, funding, events, populism, leaders and debates – will be assessed to determine whether they were previously present in the historical makeup of Guelph, Ontario, or not. Throughout the discussion of these themes, the behavioural/demographic predispositions to green politics in Guelph as well as the origins of green politics in Guelph (e.g. organizing), will be examined. As well the changing party system dynamics and the political opportunity structure in Guelph in the years leading up to 2018 will be analyzed.

For post-materialism and economy, this chapter will examine if Guelph is distinctive in its economic development, social diversity, demographics, and education contrasted to comparable towns in Ontario. To do this, a brief overview of the founding, major industries, and historical makeup of Guelph will be examined. Then party systems (voting systems, party competition, populism, and leaders) will be looked at, assessing Guelph's political history to ascertain dominant parties, leader dynamics, and past and present trends. Finally, Guelph Green dynamics (history, events, funding) will be examined to determine trends in Green voting over time compared to other towns, trends in Green Party membership over time in Guelph as compared to elsewhere, and data on activist activity or party funding directed to Guelph compared to elsewhere in province.

Questions that this chapter will address include, why Guelph stands out against other cities in Ontario. Is it distinct within its context? Is it an outlier? What are the factors that contributed to Green Party success in this place at this time?

Post-Materialism, Economy and the History of Guelph

Guelph is located in the heart of southern Ontario and is surrounded by farmlands, forest and borders the Ontario green belt. It resides within Wellington County, is approximately 100 kms west of the city of Toronto, and in 2018 over 60% of Canadians lived within 800 kms of Guelph. This, along with its proximity to Pearson Airport, the United States border and the deep-water seaports of Toronto and Hamilton, makes it an ideal location to reach consumers in Canada, The United States, and internationally. It has a bustling art scene, is home to the University of Guelph and in 2022 it was ranked #8 on the best small cities to live in Canada and #13 among Canada's small cities for Young Adults (Resonance, 2022).

Guelph has always had a strong connection to economic activity and commerce. The city, along with neighbours Fergus and Elora, owes its existence to the Grand River, which was used by indigenous people as a highway for travel and trade (Montague, 1986). Prior to industrialization and large-scale settlement first nations people resided on the land known as present-day Guelph for over 10,000 years (Montague, 1986). The area was first inhabited by The Neutral Confederacy which was a “political and cultural union of Iroquoian nations who lived in the Hamilton-Niagara district of southwestern Ontario” and the communities thrived on the abundant natural resources in the area (Noble, 2016).

When settlers arrived they found that these lands were fertile and good for European-style agriculture and in the late 1700s the British Crown purchased a huge tract of land, stretching from Burlington Bay to Port Burwell and including present-day Guelph, from the Mississauga people for approximately 1,180 British pounds. The land would then be sold again in the early 1800s to the Canada Company for 2.5 million pounds (Stead, 2002).

Though the area was inhabited previously, the city known as Guelph was founded as a hub for new residents in the region in 1827 by John Galt. Galt was a Scottish poet and novelist and was the first Superintendent of the Canada Company, hired to colonize Upper Canada. He designated the city as a place for local farmers to gather and trade amongst themselves and communities across upper Canada. Galt founded the city with a ceremonial felling of a large maple tree on St. George’s day and named it Guelph after the German Hanoverian Welfs and the Guelfs who controlled the dynasties of Northern Italy in medieval times (which gave the city its nickname “The Royal City”). Though Galt was later fired from the Canada Company for extravagance and insubordination and the settlement of Guelph ground to a halt for a time, the

city slowly rallied throughout the (late 1800s-1900s) and began to attract multiple industries outside of farming (Stead, 2002:9).

Given this fertile geographic and industrial history, in 2018 Guelph found itself firmly in the category of a post-materialist city. Ample farmland, a thriving university, and multiple well established manufacturing headquarters meant that residents of Guelph could count on a living in a prosperous city and having stable employment and income. Because of this economic security residents of Guelph were able to turn their attention to larger social issues, both at home and abroad, as the city and its wealth grew. Its location also meant that many people could work in a bigger city like Toronto, commuting home to Guelph, and getting involved in the larger Guelph community.

Economic History

Given its geographical position close to many different sources of trade and economic exchange Guelph has historically been positioned to have a strong economy and thus one could say its citizens have been predisposed towards post-materialism on the whole, as compared to, say, single industry towns outside the GTA and resource-dependent towns in the north of the province. Soon after its founding, Guelph transformed to a bustling commercial centre due to the introduction of many services such as “blacksmiths, wheelwrights, saddlers, harness makers, a watch maker, shoemakers, carpenters, painters, cabinet makers, dressmakers, tailors and coopers who made the barrels for the beer and whiskey produced locally in large quantities” all which were formed to serve new settlers and farmers (Stead, 2002:10). This diversified economy persisted into the 21st century, helping Guelph weather various economic downturns and, in

2006, contributed to Guelph being named one of the best cities to live and build a career (GuelphToday Staff, 2018).

Part of this strong and diversified economy comes from multiple companies based in Guelph who employ, invest in, and enrich the Guelph population. For example, Sleeman Brewery, founded in 1827, is now Canada's third largest brewery and the Sleeman family has been involved in various political endeavors and construction projects throughout the history of Guelph. The brewery "has become one of the most successful breweries in Canada", employed over 991 people in 2017 and invests in tuition subsidies, offers student co-op placements and makes charitable donations to community institutions in Guelph (Sleeman Breweries Ltd, 2020).

Guelph is also headquarters of Canadian Solar, which was founded in the city in 2001 and now has subsidiaries in 24 countries on 6 continents. The company employ approximately 700 staff in Guelph, is involved in several local charity outreach programs, and provide the "clean, green energy needs of approximately 21.2 million households" worldwide (Canadian Solar, 2021; Seto, 2016). Linamar, a manufacturing company that makes everything from agricultural harvesting equipment to electric vehicle parts, is also headquartered in Guelph and in 2015 employed over 8,000 people in the city (CBC News, 2015).

The presence of a Conestoga College campus and University of Guelph also adds to Guelph's history and current position as a wealthy workplace city. Not only do these institutions bring large numbers of students to Guelph, many who stay and work after they graduate, but the University is the third largest employer in Guelph and has been recognized as one of Canada's Healthy Workplace Month Great Employers (University of Guelph, 2023). These examples given here demonstrate the robust and diverse economy of Guelph, as well as the large companies headquartered there, all of which contributes to the city's wealth and wellbeing.

Education and the University of Guelph

Guelph's economic wealth has historically been intertwined with the educational prowess of the city. Prior to university education, early grammar schools started right at Guelph's founding in 1827 where boys learned the basics and their parents paid 25 cents (or the equivalent in flour or pork) per month for their tuition (Stead, 2002). Demand resulted in a girls' school opening in the 1940s, and in the 1950s Guelph's first high schools opened – Guelph Collegiate and Vocational Institute (GCVI) in 1954, John F. Ross in 1956 and Bishop Macdonell in 1962. Though the time of creation of these schools was not remarkable when compared to surrounding towns, this shows that Guelph invested in and valued education and had high levels of it from its founding.

Guelph did not stop with grammar and grade schools, in 1874, the Ontario School of Agriculture and Experimental Farm was founded. This agricultural college started with a one-year, practical, work-oriented program and expanded to a 2-year diploma in 1880 and was the first of its kind until a second college opened in Turo, Nova Scotia in 1885 (Steppler & Switzer, 2014). In time, the Ontario college would become the University of Guelph. In comparison to surrounding towns, this was later than when Queen's University was founded in Kingston (1841), similar to the time Western University was founded in London in 1878 (though Fanshaw College was much later in 1967), and much earlier than the universities and colleges in Waterloo (Waterloo 1956, Laurier 1911), Kitchener (Conestoga College, 1973), and Cambridge (Heritage College in 1993).

The college in Guelph benefitted and expanded with the help of several monetary gifts from philanthropists like Walter Massey and Sir William Macdonald and with a series of reforms

in the early 1900s and the creation of separate two-year and four-year diploma programs, the academic standards and reputation of the college was strengthened. Then, in 1922, “Guelph’s growing reputation as a centre for rural and agricultural studies was enhanced when the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC), founded in 1862, moved from Toronto to Guelph. The move, directed by OVC principal Charles ‘Shotgun Charlie’ McGilvray, marked a radical shift in veterinary medicine” (Stead, 2002:23).

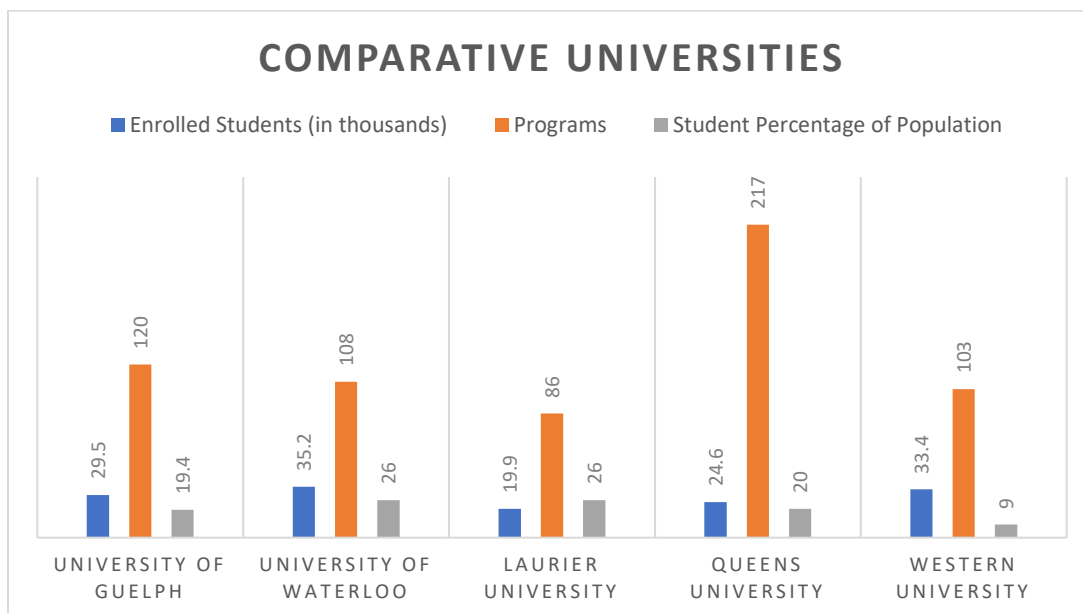
In the 1940s research took a more prominent place and talk of transforming the college into a university arose (Stead, 2002:24). Pressure from the OVC alumni and key faculty, the appeal of huge increases in the provincial amount of university students, and the argument that it would be cheaper to create a university in Guelph because the site and buildings were already in place, contributed to calls for this change and, on Feb. 27, 1963, Premier John Robarts announced in the Ontario Legislature that a university would be created at Guelph. The decision transformed Guelph. Previously seen as a “hick town” and a great place to grow up, but not very sophisticated, changed with the influx of hundreds of university workers, faculty and students who were living both on and off campus (Stead, 2002:24). This history of robust education at all levels matters for the city of Guelph in terms of politics in general, but specifically for the GPO due, once again, to the studies that show that a higher level of education is a sign of post-materialism and predisposes the electorate to vote for Green parties (Birch, 2008; Camcastle, 2007; Clements, 2012; Dolezal, 2010; Hooghe et al., 2010; Schumacher, 2014).

However, in focusing on education, Guelph does not appear unique when compared to other comparable towns. As of Nov. 1, 2017, a total of 29,507 students were enrolled at the University of Guelph, and the university offered 120 undergraduate degree programs (Enrolment Services, 2018). This was similar to the University of Waterloo which had 35,155 students

enrolled in the 2017/2018 fiscal year and offers 108 undergraduate programs whereas Laurier University has 19,953 students enrolled in 2018 and offers 86 undergraduate programs (University of Waterloo, 2023b, 2023a; Wilfred Laurier University, 2023a, 2023b). Queen's University had a student headcount of 24,649 in 2018 and currently offers a total of 217 undergraduate programs (Queen's University, 2018, 2019). Western University in London had an enrollment total of 33,356 in the 2018-2019 academic year and offers 103 undergraduate programs (Western University, 2021, 2023).

If anything, the impact of education on Guelph might be slightly lower than other comparable cities. Students make up 29,507 of Guelph's 151,984 reported population in 2018 or 19.4% of the total population (Government of Canada, 2022). By comparison Waterloo's population in 2018 was 104,986 where the 35,155 students from University of Waterloo and 19,953 students from Wilfred Laurier represent approximately 52% of the town's total population (Government of Canada, 2022). In 2018 Kingston's population was 123,798 where the 24,649 students enrolled at Queen's represented approximately 20% of the entire population while London had a population of 383,822 and the 33,356 students at Western made up only 9% of the population.

Figure 10: Comparison: University Students, Programs and Percentage of City Population



Despite a total revenue of \$825.4 million in 2018, the University of Guelph, as most universities in Canadian provinces, was exempt from municipal taxes (Brodeur, 2015; University of Guelph, 2018). However, the University paid \$381 million in salaries and \$46 million in student assistance, some of which would ostensibly make it back into the city of Guelph through housing, food, entertainment etc. purchased by students and faculty living in or around the city (University of Guelph, 2018). A high student population affects the culture of a city, increasing the number of bars, restaurants, and student housing, and changing the makeup of the urban landscape – ostensibly, a higher university population would mean demographics skew young, educated and therefore, as some studies argue, potentially Green (Birch, 2008; Dolezal, 2010; Horvat, 2011).

The demographics and post-materialist nature of Guelph is therefore informed by its longstanding economic diversity as well as the economic success of its educational institutions and their provincial and international prestige, though the latter factors do not stand out when compared to other comparable towns.

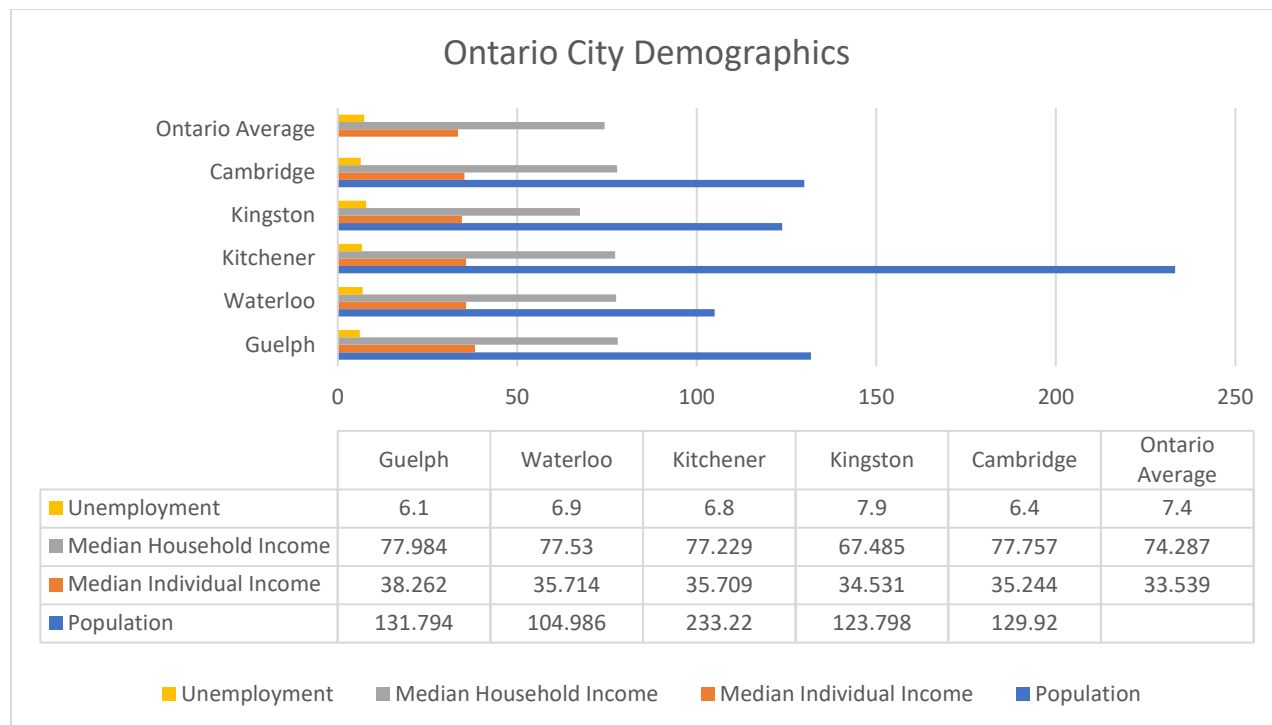
Social Diversity and Demographics

Guelph began with an agricultural founding that led to bustling businesses and a robust education system, but is it unique in this? The specific history and contemporary positionality of Guelph might explain the citizen's predisposition to vote Green. However, nearby towns had similar foundations, such as Waterloo, which was started by Mennonite farmers, or Kingston, whose first Agricultural Society was founded in 1859 (Lovejoy, 2021). Kingston also has a similar sized population as Guelph (131,794) at 123,798, as does Cambridge at 129,920, and Waterloo, Kingston and London all have established Universities (Queens, Waterloo and Western, respectively). Guelph hosts multiple large and lucrative businesses such as the aforementioned Sleeman Brewery, Linamar, Canadian Solar and Skyjack, but so do the surrounding cities. Cambridge has the Toyota manufacturing plant and the ATS Corporation, Waterloo is home to businesses like the Descartes Systems Group Inc and Teledyne Digital Imaging, Inc and London hosts the Emco Corporation and the 3M Canada Company, all successful businesses that supply many jobs in their respective cities.

But perhaps it is when we dig a little deeper into these commonalities that we see differences. Though they have similar populations, we can see that the median household income in Guelph (77,984) is marginally higher than Cambridge (77,757), Waterloo (77,530) and Kitchener (77,229), though significantly higher than London (64,743). It is also higher than the Ontario average which is \$74,287. These higher incomes track and the differences continue when you look deeper into the major industries in each city. Guelph's top two aforementioned manufacturing industries, Canadian Solar and Linamar, are much more profitable with sales revenue of \$5,277.17M and \$5,109.72M respectively, than any of the other cities' industries. The

closest is the Toyota plant in Cambridge, which pales in comparison at \$2,326.8M. According to the 2016 census, Guelph also had the lowest unemployment rate of all the surrounding cities at 6.1 percent, with London and Kingston at 7.9 percent, Waterloo at 6.9 percent and Kitchener at 6.8 percent (StatsCan, 2016). Thus, there are differences, but they are not large or striking.

Figure 12: Ontario City Demographics



*Information obtained from 2016 Census

**Population and incomes in the thousands

Though London, Kingston and Waterloo all have similar universities, none rival Guelph in agricultural focus. Since the 1960's Waterloo has had a major focus on engineering, computing and software, Queen's offers a diversity of programs, but highest ranked among them is geology, education and business, and Western is known for its nursing, business and sports-related programs (McLaughlin & Jaeger, 2007; Pandher, 2022; Queen's Gazette, 2015; Winders, 2020). Guelph also has a high population that has received a university certificate, diploma or

degree at bachelor level or above, at 30 percent, higher than the Ontario average and all of its comparative cities except Waterloo (StatsCan, 2016).

In terms of diversity Guelph sits in the middle of its sister cities. Historically, Guelph's population has been principally British in origin, with 92 percent in 1880 and 87 percent in 1921, and in 2016 the city was still majority white, with only 19 percent of the population identified as a visible minority. This sits below London, Kitchner and Waterloo (at 20, 26 and 22 percent respectively) but above Kingston and Cambridge at 10 and 16 percent (StatsCan, 2016). Guelph is also similar in gender and age makeup as well as marital, (married, common law or single) status of its residents.

In terms of political history, and instances where a deviation from the Liberal/Conservative dichotomy has occurred in surrounding and similar cities, the results are varied. Kingston differs from Guelph's deviations as it has only ever seen Liberal or Conservative MPPs elected since its first assembly in 1867. However, Cambridge, Waterloo, Kitchener and London (and their prior ridings they were created from) have seen deviations from the norm, mostly Bob Rae's New Democratic Party (NDP) in the 1990's, but also a Progressive MPP in 1921 and an NDP between 1964-1968 in Waterloo South and, much more recently, NDP MPP Catherine Fife in the since dissolved riding of Waterloo-Kitchener from 2012-2018 (Elections Ontario, 2023).

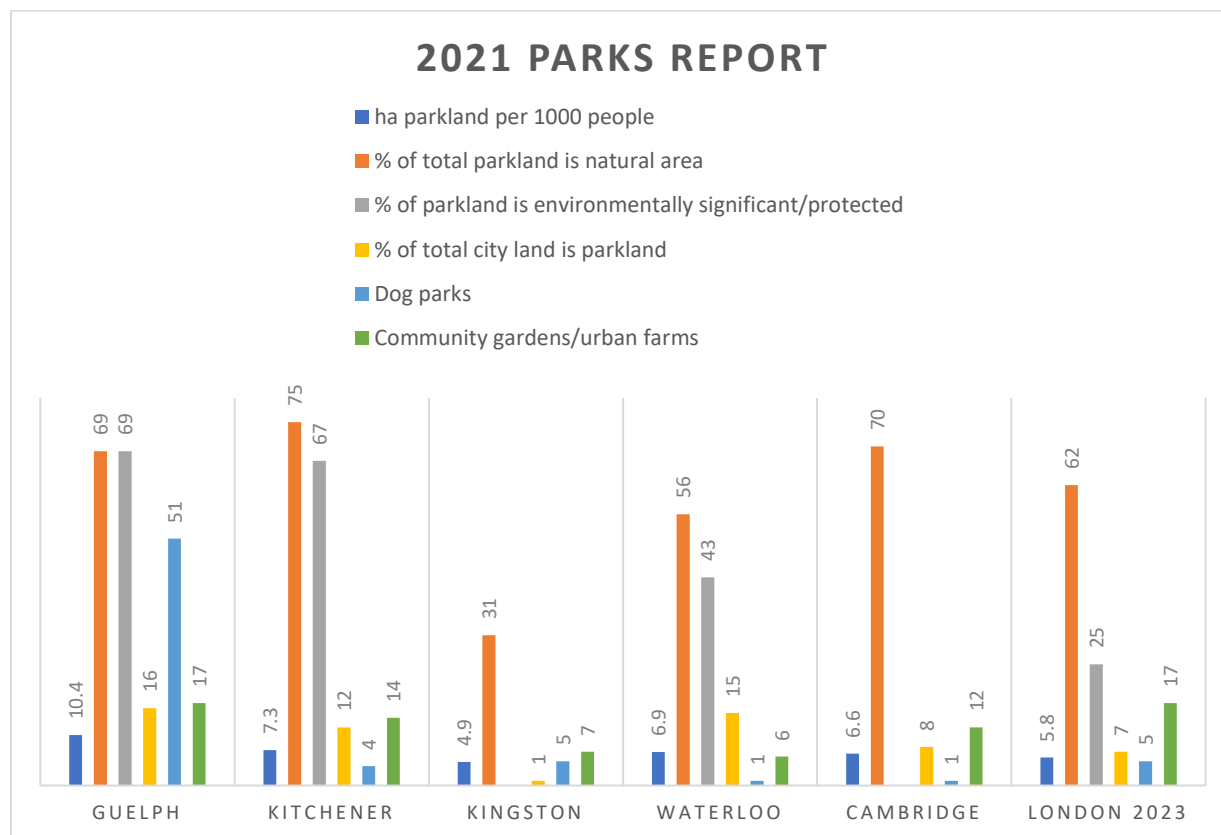
While there are many similarities between Guelph and its sister cities, the differences are of more interest for this project. However, in terms of post-materialism and economy, while Guelph broadly adheres to the themes of Green party success and emergence, it does not do so in a way markedly different from other comparable cities. On other hand, another theme of Green party emergence and success is the presence of a large environmental or social event leading to

the formation or support of a Green Party. While Guelph has not had a large singular event, it has had a history of distinctive, continuous and ongoing ecological concern, activism and events, that perhaps cumulatively constituted a similar outcome that effects voting behaviour.

A Green City

Guelph is a city where environmental protection is “imbedded in the bureaucracy” and may have been primed for a Green party candidate due to a long history of ecological activism and action (Stead, 2002:53). Guelph is a leader when it comes to protected green spaces and park land. Exhibition Park established in 1871, Riverside Park established in 1905 and Margaret Greene Park which was donated in 1966, are just some of the over 125 parks managed by the city. Today, with 1411 hectares of total parkland, the city has more green space than the surrounding towns of Waterloo, Kitchener and Kingston and of this green space, Guelph has the highest percentage that is environmentally significant/protected (Canadian City Parks Report, 2021). It also is ahead of these surrounding cities in dog parks, community park groups and community gardens. In fact, “Guelph is 1.5 times the average of community gardens relative to population with just over 12 gardens per 100,000 people” (Canadian City Parks Report, 2021).

Figure 13: 2021 Parks Report



Canadian City Park Report, 2021

(S. Dombroskie, personal communication, December 21, 2023 - Cambridge stats)

(N. Moffat, personal communication, February 2, 2024 - London stats)

The Guelph Horticultural Society, established in 1851, was one of the earliest horticultural societies in Ontario and, along with planting trees along major boulevards in Guelph, encouraged biodiversity and preservation of at-risk species in Ontario. Another early ecological force in the city is the Guelph Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) which was established at the Guelph at the University in 1976. The mandate of the group is to address and advocate for “environmental and social justice issues of public interest by conducting research, developing popular education materials, and engaging in activism” and since its founding has run many successful local and global environmental and social justice campaigns including establishing a cosmetic pesticide ban, running a Fossil Free Guelph’s Divestment

Campaign which led to the University of Guelph divesting from fossil fuels, and running a campaign to grow a forest along the Speed River to prevent erosion and improve biodiversity, to name but a few (OPIRG Guelph, 2023).

OPIRG Guelph was also central to another environmentally contentious issue in Guelph's history – garbage. Unable to find a nearby community willing to host a landfill, the city of Guelph incinerated much of its waste and OPIRG Guelph “set out to sell the city on the three Rs - reduce, recycle and reuse” (Stead, 2002:53). However, with an overabundance of garbage in the city still looming, OPIRG Guelph and other environmentally minded groups, city councillors, teachers and local activists kept up the pressure for improvement. The campaign was successful and after a city engineer travelled to Europe to investigate waste management systems, Guelph made the leap to state-of-the-art wet/dry recycling in 1996 and “in the process, it became the first municipality of its size on this side of the Atlantic to run a municipal organics recycling facility” (Tracey, 2013). This method was so effective that in 2012 the city was top of its class in both residential waste and organic waste and won the Ron Lance Memorial Award “an honour to be given each year by Waste Diversion Ontario to the city with the highest residential waste diversion rate in the province” (Guelph Mercury, 2014). So this may show a political and social culture in support of green principles.

Due to its location at the convergence of the Eramosa and Speed rivers, Guelph history of ecological concern has had a focus on a protection of the local rivers and water. The residents of Guelph are invested in this local hydrology, as evidenced by the thousands of volunteers who participated over decades in The Speed River Cleanup, an initiative begun in 1981 to promote the restoration and naturalization of the river corridor that had previously been used as landfill. This contributed to a gradual shift in the community citizen participation in municipal projects

concerning Guelph's environmental features, including "the purchase of the Arkell Springs to secure Guelph's water supply and the Hanlon Creek Watershed Study which preserved an original habitat of brook trout" (Stead, 2002, p. 53).

Though there is no record of the Green Party of Guelph being a direct result of a singular environmental or social event, the city is full of activism, perhaps attracting and filling the city with the same people who would be drawn to or support a Green Party. In 2020, the Canadian City Parks report found that Guelph had a far higher number of volunteers per 1000 people – 69.9 in Guelph, compared to 8.6 in Waterloo and 1.3 in Kitchener in 2021 (Canadian City Parks Report, 2021). It is important for understanding third, green, new and small-party support in Guelph to look at its political history in order to find out how generations of voters have expressed their environmental and economic concerns through the federal and provincial election systems. This, along with dominant parties, leader dynamics, and past and present trends, will be the focus of the next part of this chapter.

Political History

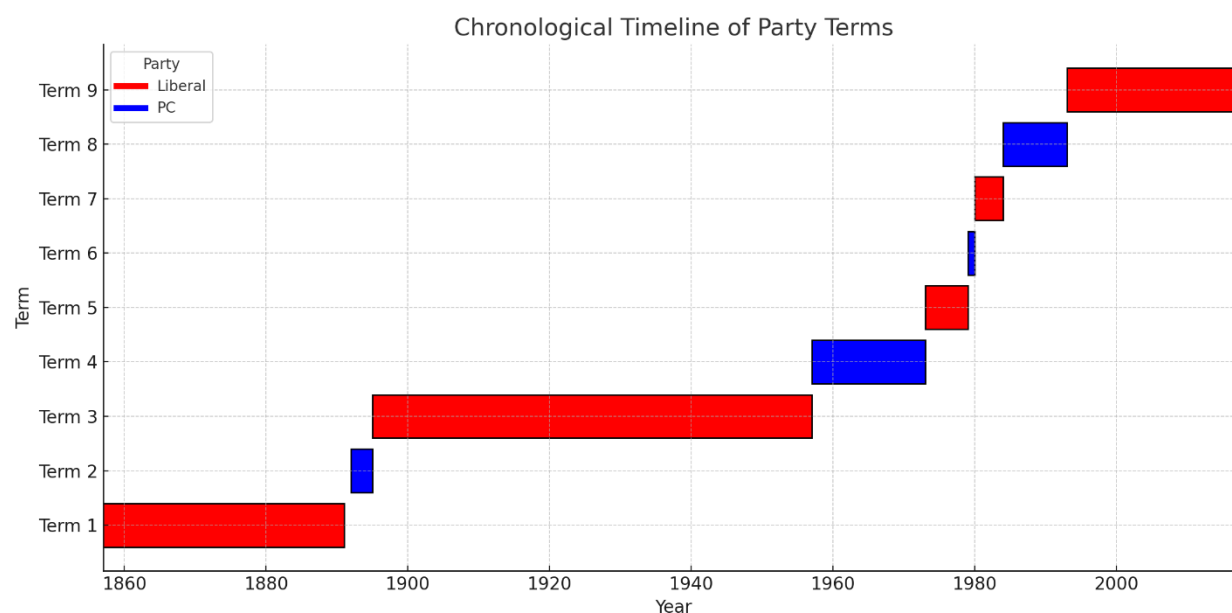
Guelph, following provincial and federal systems, operates its elections on a first-past-the-post system, eliciting the same issues for new and small parties in the city as in the province and country. Contributing to Canada's political seesawing between Liberal and Conservatives, with a few notable exceptions, Guelph's political history also mirrors that of Canada as whole. Federally, the city first sent Liberal David Stirton to Ottawa in 1857, and Liberals continued to be elected uncontested until 1892 when the first Tory MP, industrialist Christian Kloenfer, was elected. The Liberal re-gained power again from 1896 until 1957, and after that Guelph voters switched allegiances back and forth, with Tory Alf Hales in Ottawa for 17 years, then Liberal

Frank Mains from 1974 to 1979, Tory Albert Fish from 1979-1980 holding the seat during Joe Clark's short-lived minority government, and then voting in Liberal Jim Schroder from 1980-1984.

Figure 13: Elected Federal Party Year in Guelph, Ontario

Party	Government
Liberal	1857-1891
PC	1892-1895
Liberal	1895-1957
PC	1957-1973
Liberal	1973-1979
PC	1979-1980
Liberal	1980-1984
PC	1984-1993
Liberal	1993-Present

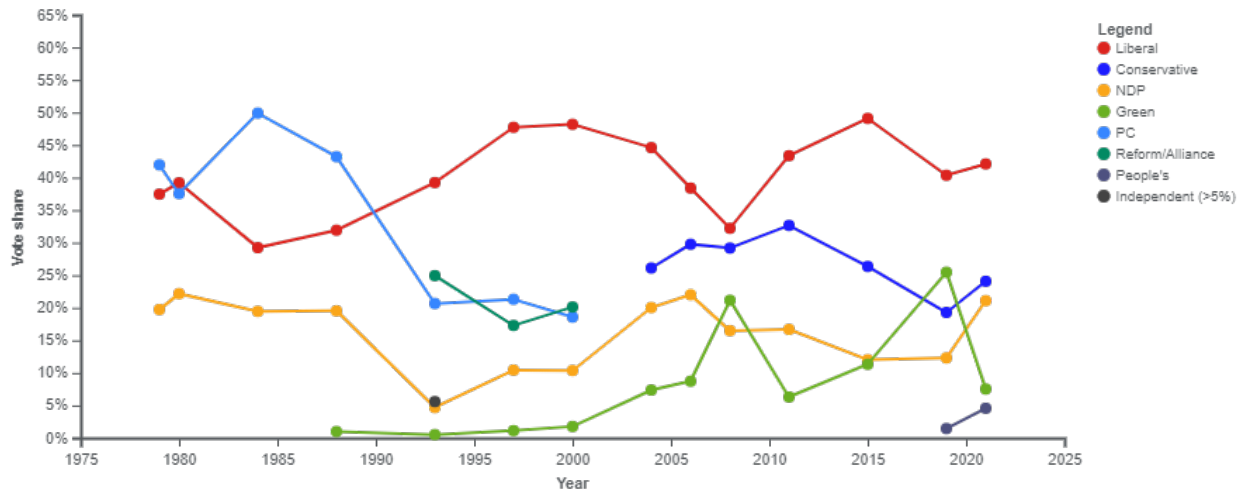
Figure 14: Chronological Timeline of Federal Party Terms in Guelph, Ontario



Schroder then lost to Tory Bill Winegard in 1984 and Winegard served until 1988, after which he became the first minister of science in 1990 and retired in 1993. In 1993 Brenda

Chamberlain was elected from the Liberals, the first of three landslide victories for the Liberal government of Jean Chretien. The Liberal support continued in 2008 when Frank Valeriote took over for Chamberlain, and continued again in 2015 when Llyod Longfield took over for Valeriote. Longfield is the current MP for Guelph.

Fig. 14: Federal Vote share in Guelph



Provincial Politics in Guelph

Up until 1902, this back and forth trend in politics did not reflect provincially in Guelph. Starting in 1867, with Peter Gow, Guelph saw Liberal MPPs James Massey (1876-1879), James Laidlaw (1879-1886), Donald Guthrie (1886-1894) and finally John Mutrie (1894-1902) all represent Guelph at Queen's park. This Liberal streak was finally broken by Conservative Joseph Downey in 1902. When Downey left politics in 1910 to become superintendent of the Ontario Hospital at Orillia, his position was filled by two more elected Conservatives, Jowan Howitt and Henry Scholfield who served from 1910 to 1914.

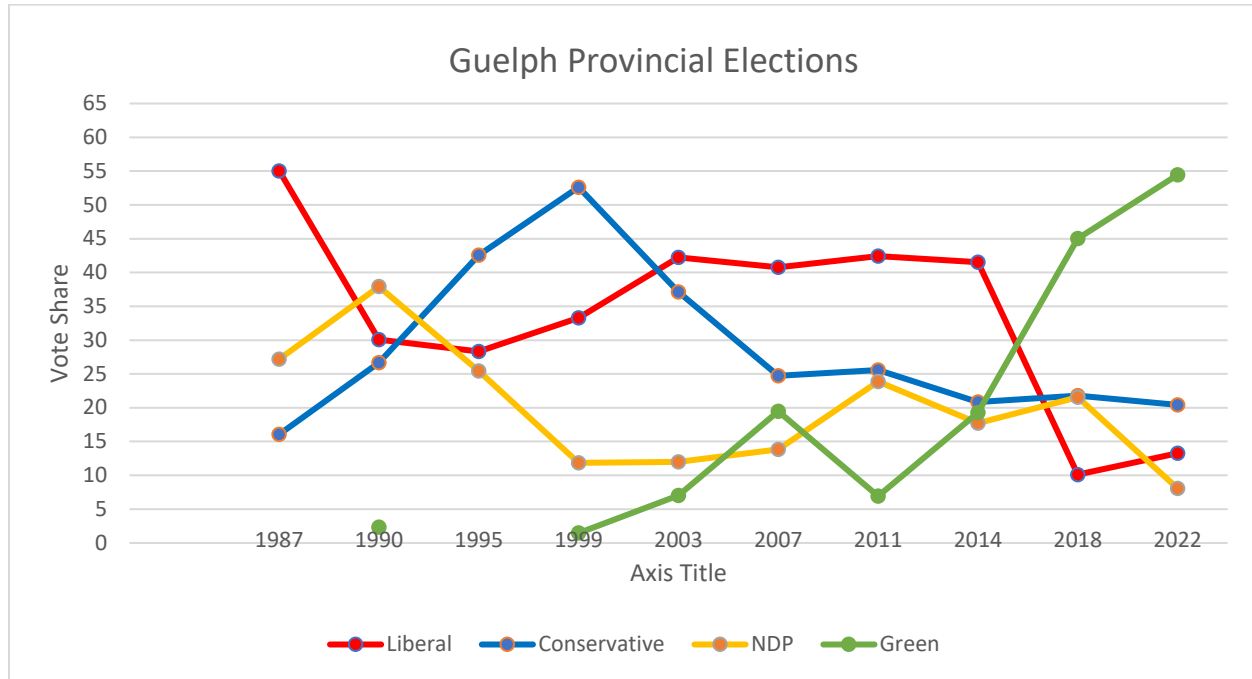
The riding then flip-flopped between Liberals and Conservatives until, in 1943, the first deviation from the norm occurred. Leslie Hancock, the only member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) ever elected in Guelph, won when the CCF came within four

seats of forming the provincial government. Hancock was a Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) horticultural professor and “one of only two members of his caucus to support an alliance with the communist Labour Progressive Party” (Stead, 2002:39). Things returned to normal in 1945 with the election of Tory W.E. (Bill) Hamilton, who held the seat for 10 years, and then the switch to Liberal in 1955 and 1985 with Harry Worton and Rick Ferarro.

Then came the second deviation. In 1990 school board trustee and trade unionist Derek Fletcher won in the stunning election of Bob Rae’s New Democratic Party government. Fletcher served until 1995 when he was defeated by Conservative Brenda Elliot⁵. Elliot was part of the conservative Common Sense revolution headed by Mike Harris and was re-elected in 1999. In 2003, Liberal Liz Sandals took the riding and held it again in 2007, 2011, and 2014. The final deviation occurred in 2018 when Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner made history by winning the Guelph provincial riding.

⁵ With Elliot’s election, Guelph became the only city in Canada where women headed all three levels of government when, in 2000, Mayor Karen Farbridge was elected, joining MP Brenda Chamberlain and MPP Brenda Elliot, perhaps showing the city’s ability to break with tradition

Figure 16: Provincial Vote Share in Guelph



Assessing Guelph's provincial political history shows us that the city has shown an ability to move beyond the Liberal/Conservative dichotomy with CCF and NDP in the past. In more recent history, it also shows that, since 2003, the Ontario Liberals enjoyed a steady and stable base of support in the town and that this support was mirrored provincially with a Liberal premier during those years. The steep drop in support in Guelph between 2014 and 2018 was also mirrored provincially, with the Ontario Liberal Party finishing the 2018 election with only 7 seats – an all-time historic low. It is therefore important to briefly assess the larger picture of electoral politics during those years as it no doubt had an effect locally.

The Ontario Liberal party won the provincial election under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty in 2003. McGuinty, re-elected in 2007 and 2011, ran on his party's platform of investing in healthcare and education. However, in 2011 he became embroiled in healthcare and gas plant scandals, reducing the Liberal win to a minority in 2011. In 2012 McGuinty stepped down as the gas plant scandal refused to go away, and Kathleen Wynne was elected to succeed

him. Wynne, who was MPP for Don Valley West since 2003, and who had served in various cabinet positions under McGuinty, “allowed the Liberals to fight under the banner of ‘change’ in the 2014 election — promising pension reform and a new kind of politics by the province’s first woman, and first openly gay, premier” (2018 Star Article).

Though Wynne was able to successfully make multiple reforms during her tenure – raising minimum wage, providing free drug coverage for those Ontarians under 25 and introducing free post-secondary tuition for low-income families – the Liberal scandals of her predecessor continues to haunt her. Though Wynne steadfastly maintained that she had nothing to do with, and no knowledge of, the gas plant cancellations, PC Leader Tim Hudak publicly attempted to implicate her leading up to the 2014 election, claiming that “[t]his is more Kathleen Wynne’s scandal than [former premier] Dalton McGuinty’s”, perhaps irrevocably attaching her name to the Liberal scandal (Talbot, 2018). Additionally, her reforms to the sex-education curriculum were unpopular, as were her cap-and-trade agreements with Quebec and California, however, it was her privatization of Hydro One, and the subsequent soaring electricity bills for Ontarians, that spurred major backlash and saw Wynne’s approval rating drop to 14 percent, the lowest of any premier in Ontario’s history.

This unpopularity was reflected in Guelph, but it was not the only factor at play in regards to the Liberal Party in the city. Liz Sandals, the long-time Liberal incumbent, who had served Guelph from 2003 to 2018, stepped down, saying she was ready to become “a full-time grandmother” (CBC News, 2018b). With no incumbent, the Liberal Party selected Sly Castaldi as their candidate in Guelph. Castaldi, who was described as “a passionate community activist who has focused her career on fighting gender violence,” had served as the executive director for

Guelph Wellington Women in Crisis for the past 14 years. However, her experience in the community was not enough to set her up for success (Wellington Advertiser, 2018).

Similarly, the NDP Candidate in Guelph, Agnieszka “Aggie” Mlynarz, was a 28 year old graduate of the University of Guelph’s Masters program in theater studies who was running for the first time (Armstrong, 2018; Carty, 2018). The NDP had enjoyed a steady third place spot in Guelph for a number of years and, prior to Mlynarz, James Gordon was the candidate who had run and he had come very close in the 2011 provincial election to coming in second to the reigning Liberals – only 800 votes behind Conservative candidate Greg Shirk.

Conservative candidate, Ray Ferrero, was also not an incumbent in 2018. There had not been a steady Conservative candidate since 2003 when Brenda Elliot had stepped down. Ferrero was also caught up in a bit of controversy in the media when, at a community all-candidates debate, he was reported to have called the nomination process for the party “a comedy of errors” and said that he “regretted that Christine Elliott didn’t win the leadership race” (Beuckert, 2018). Though Ferrero’s campaign manager later stated that he was “behind Doug Ford 110 percent”, this internal party strife did not reflect a cohesive PC team (Beuckert, 2018).

It is here, when reviewing the political history of Guelph, that we can turn once again to a discussion of populism and ask what presence or influence it had in the city. Though there is no one perfect way of assessing this, examining the presence and popularity of populist parties in Guelph is a good start. In recent history, Guelph has had a populist party presence. Starting in 2018 Thomas Mooney ran in Guelph as a candidate for the Ontario party, a party founded in the same year and described by Jarvis (2022) as a minor “right-wing populist” and socially conservative political party. 2018 was the only year The Ontario Party had a candidate in Guelph, and Mooney only managed to get 0.28 percent support (181 votes).

Then in both the 2022 and the 2025 provincial elections, Guelph saw candidates run under the New Blue Party of Ontario. Founded in 2020, the New Blue Party was another right-wing populist party that formed when members split from the Progressive Conservative Party, they ran in 2022 and 2025 on a platform that called for anti-“woke” legislation around critical race theory, anti-DEI initiatives and to ban COVID-19 mandates (*New Blue Party of Ontario*, 2025). However, this did not seem to resonate with the residents of Guelph as they only received 2.96 percent (1,619 votes) in 2022 and 1.89 percent (1,137 votes) in 2025 (Elections Ontario, 2022b, 2025).

For context, however, we can contrast this populist political presence with similar surrounding cities - perhaps these numbers in Guelph were actually high for the area. Looking at the riding of London North Center, in 2022 they had candidates for both the Ontario Party and the New Blue party, totaling together 3.64 percent of the vote (1,568 votes) and in 2025 only the New Blue Party had a candidate who took 1.06 percent of the vote (512 votes). In both 2022 and 2025, these populist parties polled below the London Green Party. In Waterloo both the 2022 and 2025 elections had New Blue and Ontario candidates, polling at 3.42 percent (1,537) and 2.1 percent (868 votes) respectively combined, once again below the Waterloo Green Party candidate. In Kitchener Center 2022 only saw a New Blue candidate in fifth place at 5.22 percent (2,209 vote) but in 2025, even though the riding had both a New Blue and Ontario Party candidate, their combined percentage 2.0 (805 votes) and 1.0 (398 votes) respectively, was even less.

In Cambridge we do see a slight deviation from these cities. In 2022 the New Blue Party received 11.10 percent of the vote (4,374 votes) coming in fourth place above the Green party candidate (8.98 percent and 3,537 votes). This may have been due to the candidate, Belinda

Karahalios, being the co-founder of the New Blue Party. This popularity as co-leader did not extend to 2025, however, when Karahalios fell to fifth place below the Cambridge Green party candidate and received only 4.6 percent (2,025 votes). So it seems as though populist sentiments, at least those that were politically reflected, were on average lower in Guelph, but were overall low in all the surrounding cities as well.

The details surrounding the political context of the 2018 provincial election will be examined in much more detail in the following chapter. For now, this overview of Guelph's political history provides shows that, until quite recently, Guelph was not unique in its provincial and federal elections. The dynamics of main party leaders, party competition and electoral trends was similar to many other cities in Ontario, however, as seen in the next section, Guelph is unique when it comes to Green politics.

Green Politics in Guelph

This section will address Guelph Green Party dynamics (such as their history, leaders, and funding) to determine trends in Guelph citizens' green voting preferences over time in comparison to the surrounding towns and cities. As well, trends in Green Party electoral vote share over time in Guelph and other municipalities will be examined to show that Guelph is unique in its history of Green support. Finally, this section will analyze data on public monetary donations directed to the campaigns in Guelph in comparison to other ridings. This information taken together will demonstrate that the breakthrough in 2018 was not a complete surprise and was partially built on prior work to create a unique foundation for Green Party success in Guelph.

Though the Green Party has gained a lot of ground both federally and provincially in Guelph recently, this was not always the case. In fact, though Guelph had federal and provincial political candidate much earlier, the first provincial candidate for the Green Party did not run in Guelph until 1990. This candidate was Bill Hulet, who was a writer and “a long-time activist who organized a rent strike, proposed a local currency system, and was a leader in a charter-challenge lawsuit against Walmart” (Green Party of Canada, 2006; Vocamus Press, 2021). He was a downtown Guelph resident and worked at the University of Guelph. Hulet had run as an independent in the previous provincial election in 1987 before switching to the GPO, and after a lack of success in the 1990 provincial election, Hulet ran federally in 1988 and again in 2000. Though Hulet did not win any of the elections he ran in, he is notable as he set the precedent for Green Party politics in Guelph.

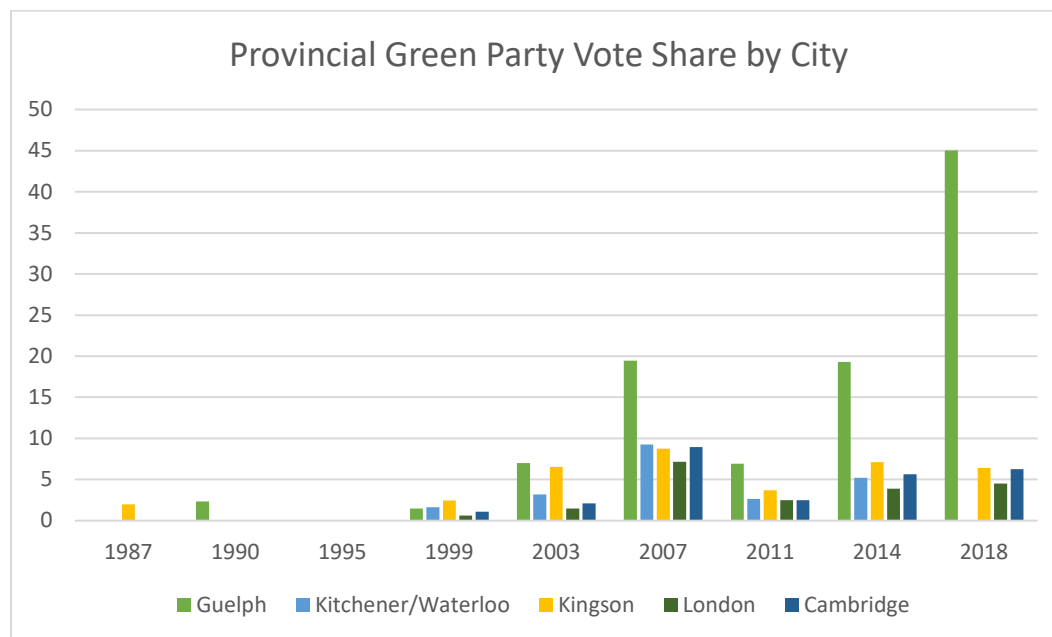
There was no provincial Green candidate in the 1995 election, but then in 1999 Bradley Shaw stepped up for one term and then in 2003 Ben Polley took over. Polley was an environmentalist and was the owner of Evolve Builders Group, which “specializes in building sustainable, energy-efficient and eco-friendly homes” (O’Reilly, 2020). Polley ran again in 2007 and saw a considerable increase in support (from 3,917 up to 9,750 votes). Despite this increase, however, it was Steve Dyck who ran in the 2011 provincial election. Dyck was a volunteer for the Guelph Citizens Climate Lobby and founder and President of Guelph Solar, and had been lauded as “instrumental in creating green economy jobs in Guelph” and as a “key organizer and active member of Fair Vote Guelph and Democracy Guelph”, organizing numerous town halls and debates on electoral reform (The Green Party of Canada, 2019). Following in Hulet’s footsteps, after this Dyck switched to running for the federal Green Party and in his place ran Mike Schreiner.

Schreiner is an American-born Canadian. Born in WaKeeney, Kansas, he earned bachelor's degrees in business administration and history from the University of Kansas in 1992 and a master's degree in history from Indiana University Bloomington in 1994. Schreiner and his wife moved to Toronto in 1994, where Schreiner started his first business, Toronto Organics, which specialized in delivering food to consumers. After moving to the Guelph area, Schreiner continued his ventures as an entrepreneur and small business owner by operating food distribution services. “One company – WOW Foods – was awarded the Citizens Bank of Canada Ethics in Action Award for socially responsible business and the Toronto Food Policy Council's Local Food Hero Award. He also co-founded Earthdance Organics, a Guelph-based food production business that supplied area health food stores and farmers' markets in the early 2000s” (The Hamilton Spectator, 2011).

Having run for the Green Party previously in both Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock (2009) and the Simcoe-Grey (2011) electoral districts, Schreiner increased GPO support significantly in Guelph, obtaining 10,230 votes, but falling short of winning by 11,768 of votes and coming in third to Liz Sandals of the Liberal Party. However, perhaps due in part to long-time Liberal candidate Sandals stepping down, in 2018 he was successful, obtaining double the votes of the Conservative second-place candidate (29,082 to 14,084) and becoming the provincial candidate in Guelph and making history as the first Green MPP in Ontario.

As seen below in Fig. 3, Guelph has, and has almost always had, a stronger provincial Green Party vote share than any of its surrounding comparable cities.

Figure 17: Provincial Green Party Vote Share by City



Federally, the Green Party in Guelph has had a somewhat similar trajectory, minus the victorious finish. The first federal candidate was also Bill Hulet in 1988 and then in 1993 Simon C. Francis ran for the federal greens in Guelph, and in 1997 Frank Marchetti stepped up to the plate. However, both these candidates had little to no support, with Francis obtaining only 318 votes (0.51 percent) and Marchetti 589 (1.12 percent). The familiarity of Hulet who ran once again in the 2000 election did not seem to help much – he was only able to obtain 966 (1.76) votes as the Green federal candidate. However, in 2004 a new candidate stepped on to the scene and began to increase the green federal profile in Guelph

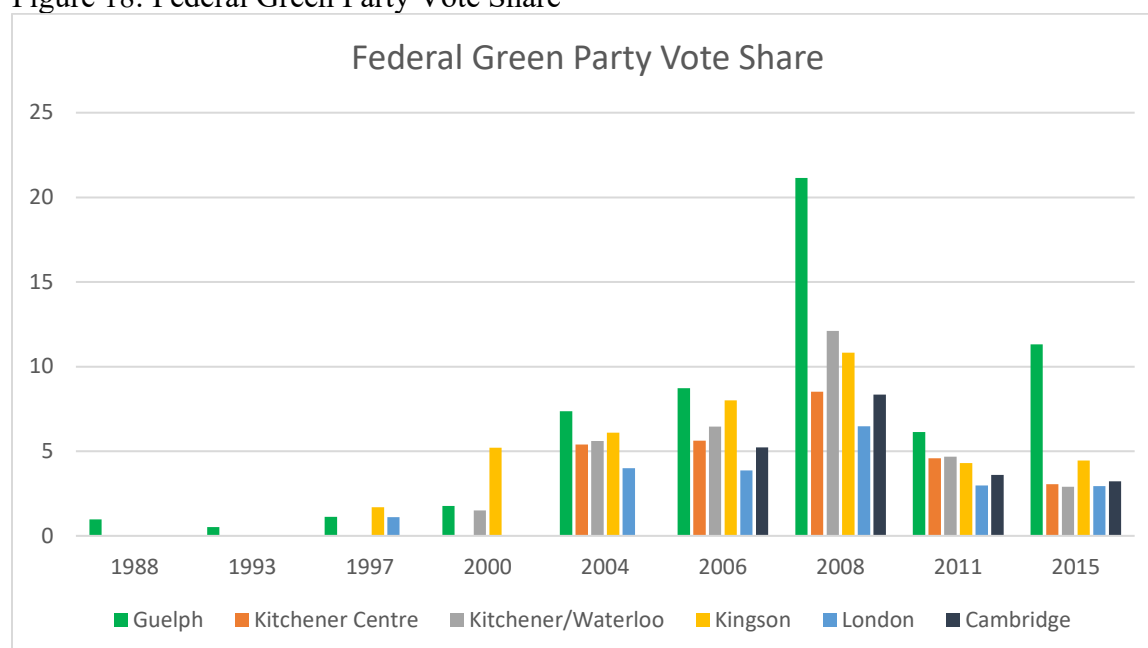
Mike Nagy, though born in Hamilton in 1961, had strong ties to Guelph with his mother being born and raised there, while his grandfather worked at the Guelph Mercury. Nagy was also active in multiple local environmental organizations, including the Guelph/Eramosa Township Environmental Stewardship Council, the Water Committee for the Centre Wellington Citizens Coalition, OPIRG Speed River Project, Eramosa Sounding Community Action Committee, and

Pollution Probe and Arts and Culture Eramosa (Vasil, 2016). Perhaps it was this involvement that drew Guelph voters to Nagy as he ran again and rose in popularity in the 2006 and 2008 federal elections (5,376 (8.72 percent) and 12,454 votes (21.15 percent) respectively). This final jump in support mirrored the federal surge of Green Party support in 2008 as mentioned previously.

Then in 2011 John Lawson took up the federal candidate position in Guelph. Lawson was a pastor in the United Church and had studied at both London School of Economics and Princeton. He was actively involved with an array of denominations and in the Guelph community at large, opposed a large Wal-Mart development in the North end of Guelph, fought poverty and organized religious discussions and forums held in local pubs (Guelph Mercury, 2011). After Lawson, the candidacy was taken up by a rather unlikely candidate for the 2015 election. Gord Millar had previously been a PC candidate for riding of Cochrane South in 1995 and Nipissing in 1997, and was the president of the federal Conservative riding association in Nipissing, home riding of then-Premier Mike Harris. However, even as a Conservative, Millar had green tendencies as he “had served as the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario from February 1, 2000 to May 18, 2015” (The Canadian Press, 2010). Though he only ran in Guelph in 2015, Millar went on to run for the Green Party in the riding of Parry Sound – Muskoka in 2019, where he came in third with 8,409 votes.

Though the federal Guelph Green Party was not successful against rival parties in these years, it is pertinent to note that once again they did receive a higher vote share than any other federal Green Party candidate in surrounding comparable cities since 2004 (see Fig. 4). This meant that, in comparison to other cities in Ontario, Mike Schreiner’s win thus makes historical sense due to the Green Party’s continued presence in Guelph.

Figure 18: Federal Green Party Vote Share



*Used 2011 redistributed results

**Kingston did have a GP candidate in 1984 that got 1.0% of the vote share

City Politics

At a municipal level the City of Guelph also has a unique history of prioritizing sustainability, most obviously seen in its garbage program, transit, and protection of water and green spaces. These gains were achieved through collaboration between citizen involvement and political policy implementation. In 1993 the city's strategic plan included sustainability in its goals, and at the request of the city of Guelph, the Guelph Green Plan was created and implemented by the Guelph Round Table on the Environment and Economy which was run by city councillors and volunteers beginning in the 1990s. These sustainability principles were used as foundation for their growth strategy and are fully integrated into Guelph's official Community Energy Plan addressing climate change in 2007. This initiative was spearheaded by mayor Karen Farbridge, showing once again her green city commitment, and made Guelph one of the very first municipalities in Canada with such a plan. Compared to 78 of the top populous

municipalities across Canada, Guelph was seventh in creating a municipal climate change plan, with surrounding similar municipalities trailing far behind (Kitchener/Waterloo in 2013, Cambridge in 2013, and Kingston 2014) (Guyadeen et al., 2019).

These strategies set out in the City of Guelph's plan were not just lip service, but had real effect, resulting in Guelph being uniquely green. For example, Guelph being one of only two cities⁶ in Canada which saw an increase in urban greenness between 2011 and 2019 according to a Statistics Canada report (Lantz et al., 2021). Another example of this is Guelph's Community Energy Initiative, also implemented by the city in 2007, which aims to "use less energy in 25 years than we do today," "consume less energy per capita than comparable Canadian cities," and "produce less greenhouse gas per capita than the current global average" (Subject, 2015).

Guelph is committed, and makes it easy, to reducing carbon emissions by offering outstanding public transportation. Its bus system stands out as easier and more efficient compared to those in other cities, reflecting the city's dedication to making public transit widely accessible for its residents. In addition to an excellent public transport system, Guelph prioritizes the creation of safe and well-maintained bike paths. The city has made significant road renovations and adjustments to foster a bike-friendly environment (Subject, 2015).

This environmental focus extends to the University of Guelph as well. Ontario columnist Danielle Subject notes that "U of G students are constantly striving for stronger environmental sustainability on campus" and since 2015 "reusable mugs are strongly encouraged throughout campus by offering discounts as an incentive for students" with the goal of making the campus a water-bottle free space (Subject, 2015)

⁶ Kitchener, Ontario being the other city. Guelph went from 80 per cent in 2011 to 86 per cent in 2019. Kitchener, meanwhile, went from 76 per cent to 81 per cent.

Another key factor affecting sustainability in Guelph in the 2000's was the mayor, Karen Farbridge. Farbridge was elected to Guelph City Council in 1994 and six years later, she became the first female mayor of Guelph, serving for two terms (2000-2003, 2006-2014). Farbridge ran on a platform with three main goals: 1) sustainability, 2) community engagement, and 3) the need for more women in politics, and while in office was accredited with making "great strides in advancing local environmental sustainability" (CWRC). Starting as co-chair on the aforementioned Guelph Round Table on the Environment and Economy "Farbridge saw a wealth of knowledge and passion for environmental issues in Guelph and moved to create a collaborative relationship between the local government and the community to facilitate positive social and environmental change" and was instrumental in implementing sustainable policies such as the garbage program and "led the city in diverting waste from landfills, developing one of Canada's earliest community energy plans to address climate change, and engaging more citizens in conversations about sustainability" (CWRC).

This chapter has illustrated that the context and history of the City of Guelph is distinct in many ways. Guelph is a leader in ecological considerations and developments, as showcased through its leading number of parks, green initiatives and sustainable practices. Guelph also has a wealthy and well-educated populace, supported by a strong economy of diverse businesses. Politically, the city of Guelph has also been distinct in its support of green politics, forming a solid base for the party both provincially and federally, even if the Greens only won recently. However, this examination has also shown that the City of Guelph in many ways is not distinct when it comes to many characteristics of similar surrounding towns. Kingston and London had established universities before or at the same time as Guelph, Cambridge and Kingston have

similar populations, Kitchener has more parks, and multiple of these cities have equally strong economies.

With this more in-depth context of the City of Guelph's economic, demographic, political, and institutional history, this project can now effectively explore the specific factors and setting of Guelph in 2018. Given that this chapter's analysis has not been able to burnish a definitive conclusion as to Guelph's distinction of Green Party support from other surrounding towns, obviously something more is needed. Therefore, this project now turns to the 2018 demographic variables, geographic and economic landscape, and political opportunity structures, as well as one-on-one interviews with those involved in the Green party campaign in 2018, in an attempt to clarify specific conditions or factors that lead to the GPO's victory there.

Chapter 5: Exploring Green Victory in Guelph 2018

The purpose of this project was to address the Green party victory in Guelph Ontario in 2018 to ask the questions Why Guelph, Why Greens, and Why Now? This chapter will address the findings of this research project which mirror relevant themes of comparative Green party success, third-party political gain and voting behaviour. However, these factors alone are not enough to adequately answer the questions posed by this historic shift in political power. I address this gap through a detailed analysis of the 2018 demographic variables, geographic and economic landscape, and political opportunity structures in Guelph, Ontario as well as conducting interviews with Green Party members and volunteers in order to fill in the gaps left by prior political research.

Given the fact that Green party had never won a seat in Ontario before at this level, my project adds to prior research into Green parties abroad because of its Canadian focus and is also distinct from Canadian third-party analysis due to its unique temporal position. To this end, I began with analyzing the literature surrounding Green Parties in parliamentary systems in Europe and Australasia dating back to the early 1970's and from that literature drew out five distinct themes of Green Party emergence and success. I then took those themes and applied them to the literature, what little there was, surrounding the Green Party of Canada and the Green Party of Ontario. Through this comparison I found that the themes of post-materialism, economy, funding, voting systems and party competition were applicable to the federal and provincial Canadian experience. However, the European literature differed in that the themes of social and environmental events were not relevant to the Canadian case, and that the new themes of party leaders, debates and Ontario neoliberalism were unique. Additionally, the themes of party

competition, though relevant as the European example, was more complex in the Canadian case, finding that internal party strife was relevant to Green Party success.

Next, I reviewed the literature on Canadian third parties, assessing the arguments made by authors like as Macpherson (1953), Lipset (1954) and Pinard (1971) who argued for factors such as region, voter discontent, and the Canadian parliamentary system as a whole.

In preparation for the assessment of Guelph, I also closely read the literature on voting behaviours to review what authors have said about why people vote the way they do. Authors Lazarsfeld et. al. (1944), Campbell et. al. (1960), Miller and Shanks (1996), and Downs (1957) argued for sociological models, socio-psychological models, multistage/bloc-recursive approaches, and rational choice models, respectively. Then added to this was an application of the theory of historical institutionalism.

This previous literature, though relevant to international Green politics, Canadian third parties, and voting behaviour generally, does not come together to create a specific answer for the Guelph Green question. The international answers do not take into account Canadian or Ontarian specifics, the Canadian third parties research does not look at the specifics of Green party factors, and the voting behaviour hypotheses fail to explain the success of the Green party in Guelph in 2018 specifically. Additionally, historical institutional approaches, though they add to the overall picture, do not answer the question of timing.

After exploring these approaches, this project then turned to the history of Guelph and similar surrounding cities in southwestern Ontario. The demographics, education, economy and history of these cities were compared to highlight both the disparities and similarities with Guelph. Though there were notable divergences, there were just as many parallels, meaning that this historical comparison was still not enough to answer the question of “why Guelph?”

Therefore, this is a chance to make a contribution to the literature and show what we can learn by diving deep into the specifics of Guelph leading up to and in 2018, and asking those most connected and affected by this political change, the people of Guelph who worked or volunteered for the Green party there.

Body of this chapter

What the main body of this chapter does is arrange the new information from interviews, 2018 Guelph demographics, and media commentary and apply it to each theme that has arisen in my prior chapters. To begin, I will examine the original seven themes from Europe and Australasia literature – e.g. post-materialism, economy, voting systems, funding, party competition, environmental/social events, and populism – and see if they are relevant to the specific 2018 Guelph context. Next, I will examine the additional themes and deviations that arose in the Canadian and Ontarian context – e.g. change in party competition, leaders and debates, neoliberalism in Ontario, and lack of events. Then I will look at the rationales given by the literature surrounding third parties in Canada and voting behaviour and see if they are relevant in this context.

Given my previous chapter's examination of Guelph's history and its comparative analysis of Guelph and surrounding municipalities, I will see if anything from the interviews is relevant. I will examine any new themes that have arisen from this in-depth analysis of Guelph and, finally, highlight my findings from the interviews conducted with those involved in the 2018 Green party provincial campaign in Guelph. All of these together will paint a picture of what happened in 2018 and answer the questions Why Guelph, Why Green and Why Now?

Method

Previous research on Green Party success has drawn conclusions from broader generalized data encompassing large geographic areas and timelines (Horvat, 2011; Müller-Rommel, 2002), or else has been limited by large scale surveys that provide data points instead of details, losing the opportunity for fine grain analysis (Dumont & Bäck, 2006; Grant & Tilley, 2019; Müller-Rommel, 1998). Sociological and political research on voting trends and behaviours centered around climate change often focuses on the general public, rather than on the interpretive frameworks of a specific subpopulation (Brechtin, 2003; Dietz et al., 2007; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Stoddart et al., 2012). In contrast, this project uses a mixed method analytical approach which summarizes these broad trends and compares them to the detailed picture drawn by media analysis, demographic details, and qualitative semi-structured interviews that provide in-depth personalized information about the Green party, Guelph in 2018, and the people involved in the 2018 campaign. This is necessary because there is rarely an opportunity to examine a singular historical moment and provide context for future political comparison.

The qualitative data for the interview portion of this analysis comes from responses to open-ended questions that were part of 12 in-depth personal interviews. The participants were (typically) residents of Guelph and were involved at all levels of the Green party: leaders, volunteers, rank and file members and employees. This sample comprises of a segment of the Canadian public that is particularly attentive to both the Ontario Green party and the intimate details of residing in Guelph. These candidates were also chosen as a broad representation of Guelph as, they were demographically diverse in age, employment, class and gender and, outside of Green Party involvement, they were involved in a diverse range of community groups and organizations in the city.

Participants were actively recruited using a purposeful sampling method at first, reaching out to the 2018 Green party campaign office and inquiring after anyone who was involved in that campaign who would be interested in being interviewed. After this initial sampling, the active strategy for recruiting more participants was snowball sampling. Before each interview the participants were provided with an informational informed consent form (see Appendix A) which outlined the details of the project. Participants were also encouraged to ask any questions about the project and interview they may have had. At the end of each interview, participants were asked as to who they would suggest the interviewer speak to next. This strategy resulted in additional participants who added important insights.

Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, but were guided by core questions surrounding Guelph, the Green party of Ontario and the 2018 campaign. Some examples of questions asked were “In what capacity are you involved with the Green Party?” “How long have you been involved in the GPO?” “What do you think the biggest hurdle to gaining votes for the GPO” (for a full list of questions, see Appendix B). The interviews were between one and two hours in length and were all conducted over the online platform Zoom. The interviews were recorded, both in audio and visual format, and transcribed. All the participants were informed of these details prior to the interviews, and all gave express consent for their participation. The material from these open-ended questions was then organized into themes correlating with prior research from this project. Any new themes or insights were also identified and recorded. Participants also filled out a secondary questionnaire about their personal demographics. This was for statistical purposes only and kept strictly confidential.

To supplement this information, newspaper articles discussing the Green party of Ontario leading up to and within the 2018 campaign period, as well as pundits’ commentary surrounding

their campaign, were used to supplement the answers to this project's three core questions: Why Guelph, Why Green, and Why now?

Economy

As evidenced in prior chapters, the state of the economy at the time of election and campaign can have a significant impact on Green party support, hurting a Green Party's chances when voters look to parties they believe more capable of handling economic issues instead of looking to more existential, long-term problems such as environmentalism and climate. Green Parties attempt to combat this with robust, economically focused platforms, but looking to Guelph in 2018, the economic standing of the city may have been key in their victory.

In 2018, and in the years leading up to 2018, the city of Guelph found itself to be one of the most prosperous cities in all of Canada. It had a higher than average GDP, and in 2018, a much lower than average unemployment rate at 2.3 percent, compared to the Ontario rate of 5.6 percent and the national rate of 5.8 percent (Guelph Mercury, 2018; GuelphToday Staff, 2019; Young, 2016). Additionally, Guelph had been voted the best place to work in Canada and the top city for employment, as well as awarded the title of "fastest growing economy among mid sized cities in 2018" (Seto, 2019; Tencer, 2016; McMann, 2019). As noted in the previous chapter, Guelph also had the highest median household income compared to similar sized southwestern Ontario cities in 2018.

Interview participants were aware of this wealth, with one commenting on the intersection of wealth and environmental concern as indicated by high-end electric car ownership in Guelph by saying [Interviewee 1] "I'm sure we've got to have more Tesla's per capita here than any other county" and another noting that Guelph was a target by the Green party because

[Interviewee 8] “there’s enough people with enough money to have the privilege to think enough about environment to say I can do something about it”. This reiterates the clearly post-material nature of the city of Guelph as well.

The broader picture of the economy was also looking up. As reported by the Government of Ontario’s December 2018 quarterly finances report, the province’s real GDP was “estimated to have grown by 2.4 per cent in 2018, above the 2.0 per cent forecasted” and though the government of Ontario was projecting a deficit of \$13.5 billion in 2018–19, this was actually an improvement of \$1.0 billion from the 2018 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review (2018 Fall Economic Statement) (Government of Ontario, 2019). According to the report, this improvement was a result of “stronger economic growth, supported by Ontario’s open for business approach to government that is helping to increase investor confidence and foster an environment for companies to thrive and prosper” (Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, n.d.; Government of Ontario, 2019). Additionally, the 2018 unemployment rate in Ontario decreased to 5.6 percent, the lowest it had been since 1989 due to the addition of 114,400 net new jobs (Government of Ontario, 2019).

What the economic situation actually was can differ from how the media covered it, however, and this can have a larger effect on voters who rely on news coverage rather than commerce statistics and government reports. Therefore, it is important to assess the media coverage of the economic situation in Ontario in 2018 as well. News outlets were of two minds when reporting on the economy in 2018: either they focussed on the projected deficit, noting that it was “one of the largest sub-sovereign debts in the world” and would “further pressure finances while sending more taxpayer interest payments out of the country”, or they noted the upswing in GDP and employment (Crawley, 2018, 2019; Smith, 2018; The Canadian Press, 2018). Those

articles that highlighted the deficit, however, did so while explaining that it would be used to invest in Ontario healthcare, education, and daycare, to name a few, and noted the upswing of GDP and employment, giving their articles a positive economic outlook.

Those involved with the 2018 Green Party campaign in Guelph were also cognisant of the effect of the economy on green support. Out of the total twelve interviews, nine participants cited the economy as a factor in vote choice. Several people interviewed specifically noted that if the economy was a concern there was less of a chance voters would support the Greens in their opinion:

[Interviewee 3]: “When people are scared like they’re probably less likely to look for the Greens...Like if you’re worried about being able to afford living...you’re less worried about sort of the bigger [picture of the environment] even though that that you know ostensibly that’s just as important right?”

This was not seen as unreasonable among those interviewed. However, as one participant noted [Interviewee 11]: “You can have environment as is a point of concern, but you need to have a house to live in” and another excused that [Interviewee 12]: “They have mortgages, jobs, kids, spouses, cars to put gas in the tank, all kinds of things”. Though these concerns do not affect the overall post-materialist position of Guelph citizens, an economic downturn is still a concern. These participants acknowledge that there was a disconnect between the immediate term environmental concerns and the longer-term environmental benefits. One participant sums this up very plainly, saying:

[Interviewee 10]: “When [voters] are feeling economically secure [they] can think of things that are more longer term like addressing the climate crisis, and can think of things

like you know the importance of environmental protections, when their...more immediate economic needs are being met.”

The Green party of Ontario seems to have recognized this hurdle and to combat it crafted a strong economic platform that the party could advertise. As one GPO employee noted “at the Ontario level with our policies, I think that the Green Party of Ontario is very, very strong on economic policies” and these policies were made to be down to earth and practical, leading to a strong but environmentally conscious economy. As one participant argued:

[Interviewee 4] “I feel like it’s not sort of wide-eyed, naive environmentalism. It’s like, there’s a recognition that that we need to have an economy, and the economy has to be strong and healthy, but that that should not come at the expense of the environment, and that the two can, and actually should, coexist in harmony”.

This balance could have been what attracted so many voters in 2018. It certainly was one of the reasons cited by volunteers and employees of the GPO of why they were drawn to the Green party in Guelph. One interviewee, a small business owner, explained that [interviewee 9]: “100%, the reason I got involved with the Green Party is because the Green Party is not full of activists, it’s full of business owners... [the party is] actually making it feasible for people to make the proper choice or make the better choice”. This economic messaging was also stressed by GPO leader and Guelph candidate Mike Schreiner throughout his campaign: [Interviewee 3] “Even Mike, like when he talks about green energy, he does it with an environmental focus or with an economic focus. He says, you know there’s billions...in green energy and green jobs right and you know that’s smart, because it is something that’s top of mind for Canadians and most voting citizens.” To sum up, the combination of a relatively wealthy city and a Green Party strategy that was very economically focused made it so the economy was not a huge hurdle for

the party in this campaign, thus giving Schreiner the opportunity to capitalize on Canadian's concerns surrounding the country's financial stability.

A well-rounded economic platform was also an attempt by the GPO to combat their reception as a one-issue party, with varied success. Just under half of those interviewed acknowledged this is an issue, some commenting that it was *the* biggest issue, that the GPO and the GPC still struggles with as [Interviewee 7] “for too long people have just associated the Green Party with climate action, and that’s great, and it’s needed. But at the same time, a one-dimensional party will not get elected”. One interviewee had a slightly different view on this issue, saying that [Interviewee 1] “I don’t think we struggle with it. I think the public struggles with it. We know we’re not a one issue party. We’re quite clear on that.” Others acknowledged this hurdle, but also commented that this is starting to change, and that the view of the Green party as a one issue party is only in [Interviewee 7] “jurisdictions where they haven’t had the kind of kick at the can that the that we’ve had in Ontario with what Mike Schreiner has been doing.” Another noted that “personally seen [their perception as a one-issue party] change in the X amount of years of my involvement and, particularly in ridings that have done a good job organizing, that has changed”. Perhaps the results in Guelph prove their perceptions correct – in ridings where the Green Party has history and is a contender, voters take the time to explore their platform and see that they encompass as many issues as the other leading parties.

Voting Systems

The next theme affecting Green party success is voting systems. Guelph, like all other ridings in Ontario and Canada, uses a first past the post (FPTP) system. However, this method of voting is not without a considerable number of critics. Many political and non-profit

organizations have protested this system of voting in the province. Organizations like Unlock Democracy Canada, Fair Vote Canada and All Votes Count Canada argue that Canada's democratic system is outdated, unfair and amplifies polarization (All Votes Count Canada, 2017; Dyck, 2017). These arguments have garnered some popular support in Ontario, contributing to the creation of Citizens' Assembly on this issue in 2006 and referendum in 2007. Though the referendum to adopt a proportional voting system failed, interest in the issue has remained and focused in other areas. In 2016, the Ontario government adopted Bill 181, The Municipal Election Modernization Act, which for the first time allows any municipality in the province to switch to ranked ballots for local elections (Government of Ontario, 2014; Pilon 2024). Leading up to 2018, Guelph city council considered using Bill 181 to implement a system of ranked ballots for the 2018 municipal election. However, despite nearby neighbour London deciding to make the switch, Guelph ultimately decided against changing to a system of ranked ballots, noting that they would "revaluate after seeing case studies about the ranked ballot method from other municipalities" (Wellington Advertiser Staff, 2018).

As mentioned in previous chapters, this continued use of FPTP is cited as a major hurdle for small and Green parties, and those interviewed in Guelph supported this finding. All twelve interviewees cited a FPTP voting system as an issue and six of the twelve said it was the number one hurdle for the Green Party. Five of the twelve interviewed said that they were aware that a green vote felt "wasted" to many people under a FPTP system. One participant summed this all up by saying:

[Interviewee 4] "I think that the single biggest [issue] is our electoral system, which is first past the post. And it's kind of all or nothing. So you could wind up with it as much as you know, 10-20 percent interest in the party or support for the party across the

country and still not get a single seat. I think that that's the single biggest thing, and then that translates into I don't know if I want to call it apathy, but skepticism, people who love the ideals of the party, but they feel like they're throwing their vote away if they look for it, because they know that the odds are very slim, that they'll get in, or that that their candidate will get in."

Multiple interviewees noted that the FPTP is a roadblock for voters even when the Green party is perceived to have "won" campaign debates and when their policies are seen as the strongest. This is no doubt why supporters and leaders of the Green party advocate for proportional representation, one noting that "one of the reasons I'm a strong supporter of proportional representation and making sure every vote counts, because I think that's a huge barrier for parties like the Green Party" [Interviewee 10]. This would not be a big adjustment for active supporters of the Green Party as the party already uses a system of mixed member proportional representation for all their leadership races.

It is interesting to note that one interviewee, though admitting that FPTP is a hurdle for the Green party normally, argued that given the specific political milieu surrounding the provincial 2018 election, FPTP actually worked in favour of the Green Party in Guelph. They explained that Guelph voters really did not like Doug Ford, but Green campaigners could argue that if they voted Liberal they would be throwing away their vote as there was no chance the Liberals could win in Ontario. When knocking on doors, one volunteer admitted that they "said everything [from the last 10-15 years [that had been] thrown [at] me" [Interviewee 5] "everything" meaning the arguments about not voting Green as it was throwing away their vote due to the FPTP system. They also noted that since traditionally Liberal supporters "really did not like Doug Ford...it was an easy sell for Liberal supporters" [Interviewee 5]. This dynamic is

further explored below when discussing the 2018 political opportunity structure in Ontario and Guelph.

Funding

As mentioned previously, political parties in Ontario are funded by means of quarterly allowances as determined by the Chief Electoral Officer and this funding is payable if the party received either two percent of valid votes cast or “five per cent of the number of valid votes cast in the electoral districts in which the registered party endorsed a candidate” (Elections Ontario, 2023b). In 2017 the quarterly rate was \$0.678 which meant that the Green Party of Ontario received \$157,659.41 quarterly, resulting in a total annual allowance of \$630,637.64. In 2018 the rate was \$0.636, resulting in a \$147,892.90 quarterly allowance, two quarters of which the Green party would have had access to by the time of the 2018 election. Though this is by no means a small amount of money, it was far less than the other three Ontario parties (see charts). How this funding is allocated across the province is up to the discretion of the party and can vary from year to year.

Figure 19: Political Party Allowances 2017

Political Party Name	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Green Party of Ontario	\$157,659.41	\$157,659.41	\$157,659.41	\$157,659.41
New Democratic Party of Ontario	\$776,189.32	\$776,189.32	\$776,189.32	\$776,189.32
Ontario Liberal Party	\$1,263,774.37	\$1,263,774.37	\$1,263,774.37	\$1,263,774.37
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	\$1,022,973.86	\$1,022,973.86	\$1,022,973.86	\$1,022,973.86

(Elections Ontario, 2023)

Figure 20: Political Party Allowances 2018

Political Party Name	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Green Party of Ontario	\$147,892.90	\$147,892.90	\$168,210.55	\$168,210.55
New Democratic Party of Ontario	\$728,106.79	\$728,106.79	\$1,227,201.43	\$1,227,201.43
Ontario Liberal Party	\$1,185,487.46	\$1,185,487.46	\$714,912.97	\$714,912.97
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	\$959,603.80	\$959,603.80	\$1,479,396.42	\$1,479,396.42

(Elections Ontario, 2023)

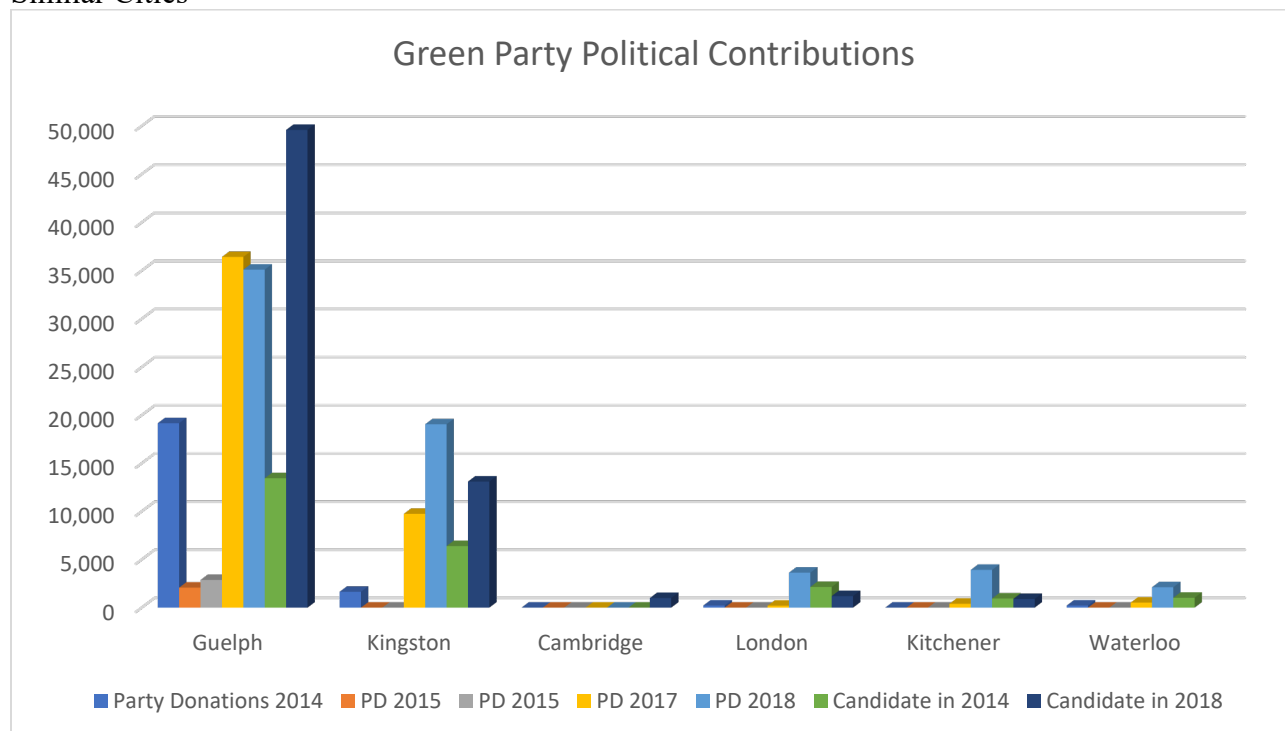
Direct donations to the Green Party are also a contributing factor. Here the Guelph Greens were well ahead of surrounding cities. Looking at donations to the Green party of Guelph, the party received contributions every year from 2014 to 2018, receiving 64 contributions in 2017 totalling \$36,424 and in 2018 they also received 64 contributions, this time totalling \$35,105.33. In contrast, many cities had no donations in the years leading up to 2018, there were no contributions for the Green Party in Cambridge in 2018, and though the Kingston, London, Waterloo and Kitchener parties all received donations that year, they were far below the numbers of Guelph (\$19,059.78; \$3,633.49; \$2122; and \$3,925 respectively) (Elections Ontario, 2023a).

As the Guelph candidate, Mike Schreiner also received political donations that were used to fund the campaign, and again, these donations far outstripped any other received by candidates in other ridings that year. Schreiner received 101 contributions totalling \$49,587.43 in 2018, whereas the Kingston candidate received 23 contributions totalling \$13,104.27, the London candidate received 3 contributions totalling \$1200, the Waterloo candidates garnered 5

contributions totalling \$1028.40, the Cambridge candidate received 4 contributions totalling \$1000 and the Kitchener candidate received 2 contributions totalling \$900 (Elections Ontario, 2023a). (see fig.1)

It is possible that this happened because the predilection of voters to Green party policy in Guelph. Interviewee 6 supported this by noting that “Guelph has a good base. We’ve run big campaigns there for a while, so they can fundraise pretty easily.” Another interviewee stated that the campaign team in Guelph was well established and “were very effective at fundraising” noting that “we did a fundraiser [and raised] 20,000 bucks in like an hour” [Interviewee 8]”. This campaign preparation in Guelph is also discussed in further detail below. No doubt this funding in Guelph went a long way in supporting the Green campaign there.

Figure 21: Political Donations to the Green Party and Green Candidate in Guelph Compared to Similar Cities



Some of the volunteers and all of the employees of the GPO were aware of the financial targeting of Guelph by the larger party, and knew it was an “all hands-on deck” [Interviewee 11] situation. As one interviewee put it: [Interviewee 9] “they [the GPO] first looked and said, ‘Okay, what do we need to do to do well?’ and fully funded that so like the full amount during the writ period, probably between 100,000 and 200,000”. It was noted that this was a normal political strategy as Mike Schreiner was the leader of the party and that [Interviewee 6] “the number one priority at the provincial campaign was to elect Mike” and that “there would be no party in the province, and probably in the country that would spread their resources equally” [Interviewee 6]. This was very similar to the Saanich strategy used in 2010 and 2011 to get GPC leader Elizabeth May elected in her riding.

In addition to financial support, many participants noted that Guelph was also targeted with other types of support – namely Green Party members and volunteers coming from across Ontario, and even across Canada, to Guelph to help on the campaign. Many volunteers came from surrounding cities like Kitchener or Waterloo, but others came from as far as BC or PEI. This cross-Canada support increased even more as election day grew closer. As Interviewee 5 noted, they were “knocking on doors with people from Manitoba, from New Brunswick from, and then, of course, candidates came in from Ontario because it looked, it suddenly...went from an outside chance to a definitive opportunity to win”. Multiple participants noted this support, one saying, “Guelph was won by people all over the province” and that “our entire staff was there” [Interviewee 6]. Another notes that another form of support was federal, noting that the GPC was “extremely supportive. They poured tons of time, money, and resources in” and gave “coordination, moral support, and the flexibility to let GPC staffers take time off” [Interviewee 8] to help out in Guelph.

Party Competition

As all provincial elections, the Ontario 2018 election was well covered by media and news outlets, comparing party platforms and debates, and informing Ontario voters of the main election issues and what the parties promised to do about them. Examining these articles gives us an idea of what was important to Ontario citizens at the time, and what party was seen as best able to deal with these issues. A review of news coverage also shows us which parties the media consortium sees as legitimate, a problem which Green parties in Canada have struggled with in the past. This theme continued in the 2018 election as the coverage of Green party issues was minimal at best. While major news outlets that compared the main party platform promises did include the Green Party, when it came to articles that directly addressed the environment, with titles such as *Doug Ford's PCs would put environmental gains at risk* and *Doug Ford says he will 'come down heavy' on polluters, but offers few details*, give no mention of the Green Party of Ontario (Benzie et al., 2018; CBC News, 2018a; Sharp, 2018; Star Editorial Board, 2018b). The former article which asks reader to “consider the alternatives before Ontario voters” only discusses the NDP cap-and-trade plans, with no mention of a Green platform (Star Editorial Board, 2018b).

Coverage of the leader's campaign debates garnered a small improvement for Green party coverage, but only just. As the GPO did not have a seat in the legislature, Mike Schreiner was not invited to the debates, and so the majority of news coverage excluded the Greens (Bond, 2018; Kupferman, 2018). However, due to a protest hashtag, #MikeAtTheMic, started by Green party supporters on Twitter (now X) prior to the final election debate, some news outlets did comment on Schreiner's absence but failed to go any further, neglecting to discuss any Green

party promises or platform (Benzie et al., 2018). This lack of comparative focus makes it difficult to determine if party competition between the parties in the 2018 Ontario election affected the Green party. Had there been media coverage of the Green party championing their environmental platform above the others, it would have been possible to argue that this may have been a factor in their victory in Guelph.

Some conclusions can still be drawn, however, by looking at the coverage that was given to environmental issues and how the other parties, the Conservatives, Liberals and NDP, were portrayed through the media as capable to address these issues. The Green Party may have benefitted without ever being named, as numerous media outlet's coverage of the other parties' environmental platforms and performance was negative. Articles from *The National Observer* and *The Toronto Star* were critical of Conservative Leader Doug Ford's vague promises and the Conservative Party's environmental track record (Sharp, 2018; Star Editorial Board, 2018b) and multiple outlets discussed a leaked video showing Ford discussing development of Ontario's Green Belt (Bueckert, 2018; Jeffords, 2018). The Liberals and NDP did not escape criticism either, with the Liberals under fire at both levels of government for giving mainly financial solutions and not meeting the promises of these, and the NDP not making the environment or climate change a priority in their platform (Audette-Longo, 2018; Crawley, 2017; Rabson, 2018; Winfield, 2018). This can lead us to conclude that if the environment was a priority for voters in the 2018 election, they ostensibly would turn to the Green party if they relied on the media to form their opinions.

As discussed in previous chapters, internal party competition is also a factor that Green Parties in Canada have struggled with in the past. Infighting and, crucially, the negative media attention it garners, can portray a Green Party as disorganized and unfit to govern, turning voters

away from them as an option. This does not appear to be an issue for the GPO in 2018. This may just be a positive outcome of the lack of media coverage that the party received leading up to the 2018 election, but there is nothing apparent from major news sources. In fact, any coverage about party collaboration was positive, with articles discussing Elizabeth May's endorsement of Mike Schreiner, and coverage of different Green party candidates lending support to each other throughout the campaign (Groleau, 2018). Though there was a large controversy in the following years with Annamie Paul running for the leader of the GPC, this was not until well after the provincial election and therefore was not a factor in the 2018 campaign.

This party cohesion and cooperation was, with a few small exceptions, echoed by those involved in the 2018 Green Party campaign in Guelph. This is due in large part to the fact that the Federal party had yet to make headlines regarding their internal strife. This was attributed to the provincial party still being small as well as Schreiner being the leader of the party. As leader, Schreiner was under less pressure to toe the party line because, as one interviewee noted [Interviewee 4] "I think that he's got a lot of latitude, because...he to some extent is the party".

The GPO was not completely without internal disagreements, however. Though no mention of this appeared in the news, several interviewees divulged that there is a [Interviewee 8] "a strong consistent...cohort within green support [and of] green volunteers who don't like winning" and who [Interviewee 9] "want a little environment club, where they can talk about their pet issue" and [Interviewee 9] "don't want to do the work to elect people [because] they feel like working to win is dirty". This difference in organizational direction is not surprising as Burchell (2001) notes that many European Green parties, including the German 'Die Grünen' Greens and Swedish and British Green parties, went through a similar struggle in the 1990's. At that time, the parties had to decide if they wanted to move "beyond the initial concerns with

raising awareness of environmental issues and initiate a new political challenge, towards attaining a direct political impact through national parliamentary representation” (Burchell, 2001:130). It seems as though this may have been something the GPO was still struggling with in 2018, but the lack of attention to it in the media means that it likely was not a significant impact on their performance in the provincial election.

A third component here is an angle which has not been previously explored about Green Party strategy and success, that is, the use of party competition in subjects outside of the environment to their advantage. Similar to how the GPO used strategic voting in the unique situation in Guelph in 2018 to appeal to Liberal voters, several interviewees noted that they used a similar strategy of party competition focusing on small businesses and fiscal economic strategies to appeal to traditionally Conservative voters in Guelph.

Interviewee 5 gave the GPO’s platform on health care as an example of this: “[the party is advocating for] an onus on preventative as opposed to putting money in. And in reality that's kind of a conservative ideal in some ways, and the idea of saving resources and those are, in some ways, conservative ideals. So...appealing to Conservatives.” This, in tandem with many Guelph Conservatives being very hesitant on Doug Ford as a candidate, may have captured a good portion of the conservative vote in Guelph.

Environmental/Social events

When interviewing participants, the trend of activism continued: ten out of the twelve participants were currently involved, or had been previously involved, in activist or volunteering groups. These ranged from political protests to volunteer positions on various board of directors to being a volunteer for Wellington Water Watchers, the Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund,

Amnesty International and more. It is important to admit, however, that this sample may be biased and not reflective of the general population of Guelph, as many those interviewed selected because they were already volunteering for the Green Party in Ontario and Canada, and perhaps the probability of volunteering for multiple organizations increases when a person is already involved. However, one interviewee did comment that, in their opinion, Guelph is not only “full of the weirdest people you’ve ever met” is also has a ‘huge amount of community engagement [and a] huge amount of activism” [Interviewee 6].

As mentioned previously, Guelph has a much higher rate of volunteer work than surrounding cities, which could perhaps lead to an increase in political involvement (Canadian City Parks Report, 2021). However, though there have been numerous studies on political association leading to volunteering and charitable giving (Alzuabi et al., 2022; Farmer et al., 2020), and studies on the demographic factors of why citizens decide to volunteer (Pho, 2008; Vaillancourt, 1994), there has yet to be studies that show that volunteering specifically leads to political involvement. Therefore, this study cannot conclude that the high levels of volunteering, both in Guelph generally and among those interviewed, was a factor in Green Party support.

Canada and Ontario

This next section will examine the themes of leaders, debates, and Neoliberalism that arose from the literature surrounding Green parties in Canada and Ontario specifically. As the change in party competition and the lack of a major social or environmental event was discussed above, the focus of this section will be on the new emerging themes of party leaders, debates, and the way that the rise of neoliberalism in Ontario was not an acknowledged factor in the Guelph campaign. Then this project looks at additional themes that were brought up by

interviewees and found to be unique to Guelph leading up to and in 2018. These are: political opportunity structure, Mike Schreiner's campaign, polling, a possibility of there being something special about Guelph, the climate crisis and, finally, luck. Assessing the relevance of these themes in the 2018 campaign and lead up to the election will show whether these themes were a or were not a factor in the Green party break through.

A Brief Note on the Rise of Neoliberalism in Ontario

As noted previously, academic sources have highlighted the importance of neoliberalism on both global and local politics. Given Ontario's history of manufacturing and recent restructuring of its economy, authors like Albo and Evans (2018), McDowell (2021), Macdermid (2018), and Anastakis (2018) have drawn attention to the even more poignant effect that neoliberalism had in this province. However, during my interviews with activists in Guelph, they did not mention neoliberalism, nor did it come up in any press reports; therefore it is difficult to gauge what impact it may or may not have had on the Green campaign. Without discounting the reality of the broader trends that neoliberal analysis highlights, gauging its impact on retail politics remains elusive.

Populism

Similarly to neoliberalism, a discussion of populism was absent from the interviews conducted for this research. Even the language surrounding populism was absent – terms such as “the elite”, “for the people” and “anti-establishment” did not surface, except for one exception. When discussing GPO leader Mike Schreiner, Interviewee 6 stated “that he really wants to be representative of the people” and that there is an “Americanization of Canadian politics” which

has led to “a system which actively suppresses votes [and] really...isn't representative of the will of the people”. Beyond this singular reference, there was no substantive evidence to suggest that populist rhetoric or conceptual frameworks informed participants’ perceptions of the Green Party of Ontario.

Populist rhetoric was occasionally employed by the party leader, Mike Schreiner, however. At the Ontario Greens’ 2018 convention, Schreiner attacked established parties, saying that “the political status quo needs to change... The only way to change the status quo in Queen’s Park is to elect a new party, with a new vision” (Green Party of Ontario, 2018). He also emphasized that the GPO lacked “deep-pocketed friends” or lobbyists, relying instead on grassroots supporters—a classic “people vs. elite” dynamic (Green Party of Ontario, 2018). Schreiner used populist-inspired rhetoric in his 2018 campaign—framing the Greens as the antidote to the political elite, emphasizing grassroots empowerment, and calling for “people-first” substance over spectacle (Green Party of Ontario, 2018). That said, his version was tempered, hopeful, and policy-oriented, steering away from the more confrontational or divisive tones found in other populist movements (Carty, 2019; Kirshenblatt, 2025; Omstead, 2025).

Leaders

A resounding sentiment given by those interviewed about the provincial election in 2018 was that Mike Schreiner was a huge draw for the Green party as he was well-known and liked in his community of Guelph. As leader of the Green party of Ontario, Schreiner had more name recognition than most Green Party candidates. However, this was not the only reason for this popularity. First, Schreiner had run for MPP in Guelph previously, familiarizing him with Guelph citizens. In 2014 Schreiner obtained 19.29 percent of the vote in Guelph, coming in third,

only 818 votes behind the Conservative candidate and increasing the Green party vote share in Guelph by 12.36 percent (Elections Ontario, 2014). Schreiner was also the only Guelph candidate that ran in both 2014 and 2018.

Second, Schreiner and his team worked hard to increase this familiarity and reputation during the four years between the two provincial elections. As the local Green candidate, even though he was not the elected MPP, Schreiner was able to attend events and comment on Guelph city changes (City of Guelph, 2018; Donaldson, 2014).

Perhaps crucially, as the Green candidate in Guelph, Schreiner was also able to go door knocking with Green Party volunteers throughout Guelph between 2014 and 2018. Importantly, as the writ had not dropped, Schreiner and his team were not allowed to officially campaign, but they were allowed to introduce Schreiner as the Green candidate and inquire if Guelph citizens had concerns about the city that an MPP could address. One interviewee noted that [Interviewee 9] “we literally spent like four years just doing that groundwork in Guelph and continuing to build [support]” leading up to the 2018 campaign. Another called this “pre-engagement”, wanting to hear from the community and know what issues were important, not only to make Schreiner and the party familiar, but to build “a strong base” for their 2018 campaign [Interviewee 5].

All of this work meant that when the writ dropped in 2018, Schreiner was already a well know name and face throughout Guelph, and name recognition has been shown to increase voter support for a candidate as well as signal viability (Gaissmaier & Marewski, 2011; Kam & Zechmeister, 2013). Additionally, this door-to-door approach meant Schreiner’s team knew what issues Guelphites thought were important and wanted to hear their MPP addressing. This shows, at least within the microcosm of Guelph, resources, time, and doing the work, matters.

Outside of Guelph Schreiner did not garner as much coverage as Ford, Wynne and even NDP leader Andrea Horwath, but that did not mean he was completely ignored. Outside of noting that he was barred from the televised leader's debates (discussed below), Schreiner and the Green party platform did appear sporadically in campaign coverage news. Arguably, the most effective coverage was perhaps when, in May 2018, a Toronto Star Editorial endorsed Schreiner, saying that "Guelph voters should consider making history and sending the Greens' Mike Schreiner to Queen's Park" (Star Editorial Board, 2018a). Outside of this, though the Green Party platform was included in trackers and some comparative articles, mention of Schreiner himself was largely ignored by the media in favour of the Wynne/Ford battle for Ontario (CBC News, 2018a).

Additionally, those directly involved with the campaign in Guelph had lots to say about Schreiner, and what they had to say was overwhelmingly positive. Interviewees described Schreiner as "genuine", "good-hearted, kind, having high integrity, honest" and "somebody who really listens" [Interviewee 1] [Interviewee 8]. Multiple interviewees noted that Schreiner was the reason they got involved and stayed involved with the Green Party in Guelph and that "He connects with people. He remembers people's names. He listens" [Interviewee 5].

One interesting thing to note is that several of those interviewed said that the reason they "got involved and stayed involved [was] because of the quality of our candidate [Mike Schreiner]" and less due to the Green party itself, and they seemed to believe that this was the case for a large number of Guelph citizens. This reiterated the evidence found in the case of Canadian themes – leaders matter. One interviewee said "most of many people who I ran into said, I don't care which party [he] belongs to, I'll still vote for him" [Interviewee 12], and another, when asked why they thought the Green Party was so successful in Guelph replied "I

believe a lot of [the support] support is Mike” [Interviewee 11]. In total, seven of the twelve interviewees credited Schreiner for the high levels of support for the Green Party in 2018. This could not be the whole picture, however, as one interviewee noted, when asked why they thought the Green party was so successful, they considered “So the number one answer is that Mike was the best candidate. End of story. Unfortunately, he was also the best candidate in 2014 and didn’t win so” [Interviewee 9] obviously there is more to the answer.

Debates

There were multiple municipal all-candidates debates held in Guelph leading up to the 2018 provincial election. Most were only open to the four parties, Liberal, Conservative, NDP and Green, but some opened the floor to alternate parties running in Guelph. These included the Libertarian candidate Michael Riehl, the None of the Above candidate Paul Taylor, the Ontario Party candidate Thomas Mooney, and the Communist candidate Juanita Burnett. Considering none of these parties obtained more than 0.6% of the vote on election day their influence on the Green Party win seems negligible.

Debates were well attended and candidates were given the opportunity to advertise their party platform, answer questions, and form rebuttals to other party promises (Saxton, 2018a). Media coverage of the debates in Guelph was even handed, giving “highlights” from each party leader, and presenting the arguments in a straightforward way. No leader was declared “winner” in any of the articles covering the Guelph debates, leaving it up to Guelph voters to decide who they deemed best suited for MPP.

In the larger provincial picture, as the Green party of Ontario did not have an elected MPP sitting in the provincial legislature in 2018, Mike Schreiner was not invited by the media

consortium hosting the televised leaders' debates. This meant that the majority of discussion regarding his performance was based solely on the debates he attended in Guelph for the Guelph MMPs. However, Schreiner and the GPO objected to his exclusion from televised leader's debates and started attempts to change the media consortiums decision, starting the previously mentioned hashtag on twitter, #MikeattheMic which did garner some attention. Premier Kathleen Wynne voiced her support for Schreiner's inclusion and local radio stations such as 570 News in Kitchener and 1310 News in Ottawa, argued that Schreiner should be included, as did several editorials, stating that since at the time the "Greens [had] enough voter support that they receive a public taxpayer subsidy of \$630,000" they could be allowed to participated as they were "supported by taxpayers and should be called upon to publicly demonstrate their worthiness to receive that support" (The Hamilton Spectator, 2018).

The attempt was unsuccessful however, and Schreiner was not included in any of the televised leader's debates. To combat this, Schreiner and the GPO hosted an online and in-person viewing party which they dubbed 'infiltrate the debate' and did a live commentary of the televised Leaders Debate in his home riding of Guelph (Bond, 2018; GreenPartyOntario, 2018). Though this was well attended by Green party supporters and locals, it is hard to say how effective it was compared to the traditional inclusion in debates.

As the Green party of Ontario did not have an elected MPP sitting in the provincial legislature in 2018, Mike Schreiner was not invited by the media consortium hosting the televised campaign debates. So though interviewees could speak to Mike's character extensively, as shown above, they therefore could not speak to his performance in provincial leader's debates or the impact it may have had in 2018. Several interviewees did comment on his exclusion, however, noting that this has happened previously at both a federal and provincial level, and is a

major hurdle for the Green Party in getting their name out. As one participant noted, by doing this [Interviewee 2] “the media is communicating to the citizenry this isn’t a real party” and that Green Party success in the past was due to the fact that candidates were able to get [Interviewee 2] “into enough debates that [their] voice was heard”. A secondary project, one that is beyond the scope of this paper, would be to assess the impact of Schreiner’s inclusion in the provincial debates as he was invited in 2022 after being elected in 2018.

Political Opportunity Structure in Guelph

One of the biggest advantages that the Green Party in Guelph enjoyed was the fact that there was no incumbent. The incumbency advantage in politics is well documented (Abramowitz et al., 2006; Alexander, 2021; Baturu & Tolstrup, 2023; Cox & Katz, 1996; Gordon & Landa, 2009). Provincially, Guelph had elected a Liberal MPP for the past 15 years, since 2003, and it had been the same candidate year after year. However, when the incumbent, a well-known and liked Guelphite named Liz Sandals, stepped down in 2018 to “spend more time with grandchildren,” this levelled the playing field in Guelph and was said to have “paved the way” for the Green Party in Guelph (CTV News, 2018; Lovell, 2017).

The lack of incumbency was also well-cited among interviewees as an advantage for the Greens. Half of those interviewed commented on this fact, saying it was [Interviewee 7] “certainly beneficial”, [Interviewee 9] “very, very lucky” and a key part of a [Interviewee 11] “perfect storm” to get a Green MPP or MP elected. One interviewee went further, stating that it should be part of Green party strategy to target ridings with no incumbent as [Interviewee 8] “change doesn’t happen unless there’s an instigator” and “when there’s no incumbent, it fundamentally changes the risk/reward proposition for the voter” so that is when the Green Party

would “have maximal chance”. Indeed, in Guelph, the GPO seemed to have seen [Interviewee 4] “the opportunity there and jumped in with both feet.”

In addition to the lack of Liberal incumbent, the broader politics surrounding the Liberal party of Ontario played a large part in the opportunity structure in Guelph in 2018. The Liberal candidate who took Sandals place, Sly Castaldi, was generally well known in community, as they had “been raised and educated there” and had “served as the executive director for Guelph Wellington Women in Crisis for the past 14 years” (Wellington Advertiser, 2018). Castaldi had also been “named Guelph’s Woman of Distinction in Public Service in 2010 and received the Queen’s Jubilee Medal in 2012” (Wellington Advertiser, 2018). Castaldi had not had the head start that Schreiner did however, being nominated for the Guelph Liberal candidacy only in February 2018. Though they were relatively well-known and had received the previously mentioned accolades, this apparently was not enough to distract Guelph voters from their dislike of the larger Liberal party. After coming in fourth in the 2018 provincial election, Castaldi did not run again in 2022.

Those interviewed in Guelph were also well aware of the situation with the Ontario Liberal party, and gave credence to this, noting that [Interviewee 3] “the local Liberal candidate was well respected in the community” but [Interviewee 5] “we had a very unpopular Liberal Government” and “the province was...done with the Liberals provincially”. Some of those interviewed did not necessarily agree with this, despite recognizing the advantage it gave the Green party. One commented [Interviewee 5] “I like Kathleen Wynne, but I must have been about one of 5 people [who] like Kathleen Wynne” and that “quite honestly I thought her portrayal and media was extremely unfair”. Others also drew attention to the role the media played in the negative portrayal of the Liberal Party, noting that “the general media spin in

Ontario had decided there was everything wrong with the Liberals” [Interviewee 12]. Though it is beyond the scope of this study, it would be worth exploring similar political outcome during an election when the incumbent government is not so disliked.

In most Ontario towns, a swing away from Liberals means a swing towards Conservatives. And though this was definitely the case elsewhere in Ontario, it was not so in Guelph. Why? Well, though Guelph had elected a Conservative MPP in the recent past (Brenda Elliot in the 1995 and 1999 provincial elections), it was not their natural state, having elected NDP MPP Derek Fletcher in 1990 and Liberal MPP Rick Ferrero in 1987, and then becoming a Liberal stronghold with Sandals at the helm from 2003-2018. This may have contributed to the city’s self-image that affected its political leaning and which some interviewees commented on. As one put it “Guelph is a progressive city that likes to be known as a progressive city,” and so any Conservative candidate was up against this image [Interviewee 6].

Not only that, but the 2018 Conservative candidate, Ray Ferrero, had also not run in Guelph previously, and so did not have the familiarity or name recognition that Schreiner did. Ferrero also suffered from some mixed messaging in the media. Accused of not supporting Ford by a local paper, Ferrero had to go on record refuting this (Beuckert, 2018; Donaldson, 2018). Additionally, due to cited “personal family issues” Ferrero was absent from four all-candidate events in Guelph during the campaign, meaning he was unable to advertise his platform (Saxton, 2018b).

The broader political scene of the provincial election in Ontario also affected the dynamics of the Conservative vote in Guelph. The leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative party, Doug Ford, was a divisive figure, a factor which those interviewed for this project noted. One commented that across Ontario they “could see that the conservative support

was rising. But the province did not like Doug Ford. They really did not like Doug Ford”

[Interviewee 5]. Another noted that this dislike was common even among voting Conservatives, saying that “Conservatives that at that time were very concerned about Doug Ford” [Interviewee 5] while another noted that, specifically in Guelph, “there were even conservatives who were like I could never take any part of a Doug Ford lead conservative” [Interviewee 9].

The 2018 provincial campaign in Guelph was also a fascinating example of the use of party competition *by* the Green party. As one interviewee put it:

“We had polls that showed us ahead of the NDP, basically as the leader of the progressive pack and so in order to counteract strategic voting, people had to believe that voting for us was going to keep the Conservatives out, and that we were the best choice” [Interviewee 6]

The Greens in Guelph also used party competition to appeal to Conservative leaning candidates who liked party ideals, but perhaps not the party itself (or Doug Ford, as mentioned previously). A strategy to do this was outlined by one interviewee when explaining how they made the Green party platform appeal to conservative voters:

“So conservative mayors were [saying] we’re spending so much on services for the homeless. If we actually take that money and put it into not a shelter system, but [into] a really supportive housing system. The number of calls will go down, and...they looked at it from a pragmatic dollars and cents point of view. So those were elements of the Green campaign that we were able to bring Conservatives into [the Greens]” [Interviewee 5].

Another way Green campaigners did this was with their healthcare platform. As one explained: “health care was an onus, and it’s a good idea. It’s an onus on preventative as opposed to putting

money in” which, they noted, was not only a good idea, but one that appealed to traditionally conservative voters [Interviewee 5].

Perhaps the combination of these factors affected the Conservative campaign in Guelph, one interviewee commented that “I feel like the Conservative saw it [Guelph in 2018] as being a lost cause” [Interviewee 4] and so they did not campaign very aggressively, with one interviewee noting that they did maybe “2 leaflet drops” during the whole campaign period [Interviewee 8]. Despite all this, the Conservative candidate still came in second in Guelph. However, it should be noted that the gap between him and the winning candidate Schreiner was large, with Schreiner garnering more than double the votes (29,082) as Fererro (14,084), and the third place NDP candidate was right behind him with 13,929 votes. Fererro did not run again in 2022.

The candidate for the fourth major party in Guelph at the time, Agnieszka (Aggie) Mlynarz for the NDP, was also running for the first time, and faced some unique challenges in Guelph. Along with lacking the name recognition Schneider had garnered, Mlynarz was 28 at the time, and a recent graduate from the University of Guelph, a fact that almost every article discussing her platform included (Carty, 2018; Seto, 2018). This may have painted her as too inexperienced for voters, a hurdle that her campaign manager commented on, noting that “young women who enter leadership roles in government ‘are constantly challenged on whether they’re capable or if they’ve earned their stripes’” (Seto, 2018).

Both Mlynarz and the local NDP in Guelph were working with a much smaller budget than the Greens as well. Direct monetary donations to Mlynarz for the campaign were \$16,039.43 (compared to Schreiner’s \$49,587.43) and the local NDP in Guelph in 2018 received \$16,888 (where as the Green Party in Guelph received \$35,105.33 in 2018) (Elections Ontario, 2023a). In addition to a smaller budget, negative party competition from the broader Liberal

party may have been a factor as well. Some interviewees noted that once the Ontario Liberal party saw that they were not projected to win the 2018 election they “started attacking the NDP” going after “after Andrea Horvath, and whatever orange in an attempt to try to save as many Liberal seats” as they could [Interviewee 5]. Though there was no evidence of this occurring directly between the candidates in Guelph, voters in the district may have been swayed by these messages from the broader provincial campaign.

Finally, one interviewee argued that, if voters were concerned with the environment in 2018, the NDP was not providing a party that they could turn to. They noted that “I feel like that if there is a conflict between what’s good for labour and it was good for the environment, they [the NDP] would choose what’s good for labour” and “[i]t doesn’t feel like the NDP is sticking their necks out and coming up with a policies that are particularly innovative...and I think people are now looking for that. They want to hear the political party that is hitting for the fences” [Interviewee 4]. Though this is not an exhaustive exploration into the NDP and their candidate in Guelph in 2018, these may have been some of the reasons the party did not pose a significant threat to the Green Party, and why their candidate finished third in the election. Mlynarz did not run again in 2022.

Mike’s campaign

A new factor that arose in this specific context of Guelph in 2018 was the campaign that the Guelph Greens ran. Already ahead of the game with an incumbent party leader, the Guelph Greens also launched their campaign well before the other parties, before the others had even chosen candidates in some cases. On Sunday, July 30, 2017, Mike Schreiner officially launched his campaign, hosting a rally in Guelph’s Riverside park that included Green party volunteers as

well as British Columbia MLA Adam Olsen, who is one of British Columbia's three Green MLAs (Mercury, 2017). Though, as previously mentioned, the Guelph Greens could not specifically campaign for the election as the writ had not yet dropped, this shows that they were organizing and preparing well in advance for the election.

This preparation was confirmed by those interviewed. One noted that “the Green party generally gets their campaign offices way before the writ drops... because we like a long runway” [Interviewee 1]. This runway allowed for organization and preparation so that when the writ did drop on May 9, 2018, the Green's had a “high performing high momentum mobilization team, whereas other campaigns typically are getting volunteers ready” [Interviewee 8]. Another strategy the party employed was to use this highly mobilized team to get a jump on campaign strategies like lawn signs. One participant noted that the goal was “to have a thousand lawn signs go up the day that the writ drops... so when everybody wakes up, they hear the election is called, and all they see is lawn signs everywhere” and the party achieved this, with another noting that the [Interviewed 5] “writ dropped at midnight...[and] I was on the streets knocking in signs”. Basically, as one interviewee put it, the goal was to [Interviewee 8] “just out hustle the other teams” and in Guelph 2018, the Green seemed to have done that.

Not only was the campaign well organized and prepared, but several volunteers also commented that it was unique in terms of attitude and atmosphere as well. They commented on the communal nature of the campaign, noting that the campaign office always had food and seemed to always be bustling with people. One volunteer described it as follows:

There's always food every night ... Sometimes she [his wife] would meet me just to soak up the atmosphere. We would have a drink after the canvassing... It was so casual, so

relaxed, so friendly. Extraordinary. I've been through many, many campaigns, and yes, there's been good atmospheres. I've never had one that was so friendly" [Interviewee 5].

Another had a similar experience, noting that:

[Interviewee 6] "It was one of the most positive campaigns I've ever been a part of. It was I mean to be a part of him like literally making history. And that was our tagline. Right? Like, let's make history was so powerful and just, it was really exciting".

This atmosphere was not completely accidental, with so many resources funneled into the Guelph campaign (as noted above) and a very experienced field director. Additionally, the campaign included rallies attended by hundreds in Guelph that hosted big names like David Suzuki and Elizabeth May, who all voiced their support and no doubt added to the feeling of making history (Groleau, 2018).

Polling

A tool used during the Guelph Green campaign was advanced polling. As the campaign reached its final few weeks, several opinion polls were conducted about voters' intentions in the coming election. Two polls, one on May 25, 2018 and one on June 3, 2018, and both conducted by Mainstreet Research, showed Schreiner at the front of the race in Guelph. Polls have been found to affect voter choice and add to the bandwagon effect in American elections (Mehrabian, 1998; Morwitz & Pluzinski, 1996; West, 1991), but results are more varied in Canada (Daoust et al., 2020; Elections Ontario, 2022a; Roy et al., 2021). However, those involved in the campaign and who were aware of the polls, were convinced that this was a factor in Guelph voter choice.

One participant commented on how, after the polls showing Schreiner in the lead were published in newspapers, they saw a jump in support and one of the strategies of Green

campaigning was to use the polls to manipulate strategic voting in the Guelph area. One interviewee noted [Interviewee 6] “we had polls that showed us ahead of the NDP, basically as the leader of the progressive pack and so in order to counteract strategic voting, people had to believe that voting for us was going to keep the Conservatives out, and that we were the best choice” and so the polls were attached to every canvassers clipboard when they went door to door in Guelph. This was specifically meant to target the sentiment that the Green Party had heard so many times before, when people would say [Interviewee 10] “I really support you, I support the party I support you know your vision, your values, your policies, but I just don’t think you can win and so I don’t want to waste my vote”. Using the poll to show that the Green party could win in Guelph counteracted this sentiment.

In addition to counteracting the negative effects of strategic voting, those interviewed seemed to believe that the polls had a bandwagon effect. One participant noted [Interviewee 10] “once people realize they could win, like the votes just flooded our way” and another commented that the swell in support “tells me people wanted to be part of something. They wanted to be part of that when and that is how we got over the hurdle is by getting everybody to say I’m green to everybody else. And so all they were hearing constantly in you would call air game is greens are winning. Everyone’s green” [Interviewee 6]. This is just one more factor that seems to have contributed to the Green Party win in Guelph in 2018.

Something Special about Guelph?

Interviewees were also asked if they thought there was “something special about Guelph” that may have contributed to this political anomaly, and though eight out of the twelve interviewed said that, yes, there was, their explanations of why were wide-ranging. One

attributed the lack of “deep seated, almost identity politics” where Guelphites “vote a particular way and have forever” to this ability to give a new party a chance in government [Interviewee 4]. Two others attributed this to the University of Guelph and its “strong environmental sciences program” which attracts “people that have an interest in that area” and provides them with degrees and allows them to stay and work in Guelph [Interviewee 4] [Interviewee 11].

Four others argued that Guelph was unique in its leadership in sustainability and Green politics: interviewees commented that Guelph is “one of the greenest cities in Canada” and is “at the forefront of Green politics in Canada”, while another noted that Guelph had been considered by federal Green party organizers as the city to launch leader Elizabeth May’s campaign [Interviewee 7] [Interviewee 5] [Interviewee 2]. Still others attributed Guelph’s uniqueness to some of its political leaders, noting that mayor Karen Farbridge, who was mentioned previously, “worked really hard” to make Guelph a green sustainable city and that “if she had a [political] colour, she would be Green” [Interviewee 11] [Interviewee 1].

Another attributed this uniqueness to the high levels of activism and volunteerism among Guelph citizens, reflecting on the Green campaign and arguing that “you don’t get 750 volunteers in most ridings. I don’t think I’ve ever seen that many before” [Interviewee 6]. Still others pointed to the strong economy and wealth in Guelph, with one noting that there are “resources available to [Guelphites] if they want to start a business” and “a lot of support for entrepreneurship” and another commenting that “I’m sure we’ve got to have more Tesla’s per capita here than any other county” [Interviewee 4] [Interviewee 1].

Climate Crisis

There were mixed results on the question of whether the climate crisis had a direct effect on the Guelph provincial election in 2018. Though several volunteers believed it to be a factor, others, including those at the organizational and managerial levels of the campaign, actually saw mentioning the climate as having a potentially negative effect. On the positive side, Interviewee 5 said that it was helpful “having an environmental candidate as climate change was starting to become a priority, not the priority, but certainly at priority”, and Interviewee 2 noted that “I think it [Green success] definitely connects with how we’re doing at our people freaking out about climate crisis, or do they think the climate crisis is being handled well by others”.

However, one of the campaign organizers had a very different view, noting that at the time “if you brought up climate, the whole conversation [would] shut down” and so, during canvassing, they actually “instructed people not to say I’m with the Green party” instead, the Interviewee explained, they were to say “Hi, I’m a volunteer with Mike Schreiner” [Interviewee 8]. They explained that in 2018 “talk about climate change wasn’t a winner for us, right?” [8] and others noted that “climate change today would have a bigger impact” and “[i]t was not what we were knocking on the doors about...it was really...more political as opposed to environmental” [Interviewee 5]. Others noted that the topic was addressed, but it was not the focus: “Yes, climate change is the thing. [but] Here’s all the other things that the Green party can do as well” [Interviewee 5]. Though this may seem surprising, it is actually in line with this project’s discovered themes, as the majority of the factors for Green party success are not tied to climate change or the environment.

This may be beginning to change, however. As one interviewee noted “during that election the planet was not yet on fire” [Interviewee 8] and since 2018 there have been multiple

major global events that have turned people's attention to the climate crisis. Others interviewed noted this change as well, remarking that people's political priorities "might be starting to shift... [g]iven the fact that we're starting to really feel the climate crisis" [Interviewee 10] and that "it would be interesting for you to do some light research on popular Canadian opinion on climate change between then and now" [Interviewee 8]. Though it is beyond the scope of this research, a comparative project that looks at the specific effect of climate crisis anxiety on two Green party victories in two differing time periods, say 2018 and 2022, may shed more light on this theme. Indeed, as one interviewee argued, given "the forest fires the flooding the severe extreme weather events that are clearly climate driven, that there is a more immediate sense that people have is that the climate crisis is here and needs to be addressed" [Interviewee 10].

Luck/All of the Above

A final reason for the Green Party victory in Guelph could be one that cannot really be studied or quantified: luck. This was acknowledged by several of those interviewed, with one saying "I cannot stress how much luck was involved" and another noting that "Not only did we get lucky in a bunch of ways...we had no major setbacks" [Interviewee 8]. Others noted this luck was an incident where "stars are aligning" with all of the factors previously discussing falling into exactly the right place at exactly the right time. One volunteered summed it up by saying:

"I'm not saying we didn't work incredibly hard. I'm not saying there wasn't very smart work. I'm not saying we didn't innovate in many ways. I'm not saying we didn't do things that had never been done before...*and* it was super lucky". [emphasis added]
[Interviewee 8]

It is possible that the coincidence of all of these various factors at the same moment resulted in this victory. Further studies could test this theory by comparing the Guelph case to another electoral riding where the provincial Green party was elected.

Discussion: What A Green Victory Tells Us

It has become evident from recent events that climate catastrophes are changing the way that Canadian society functions, at all levels, and it is imperative that government response. Whether this be by municipal planning, disaster relief, changes to insurance to reflect previously so-called “acts of God” such as flooding, wildfires and earthquakes. It is clear, however, that contemporary democracies and political parties will only take these steps if faced with pressure from the electorate.

Yet, with all this in mind, with the exception of Guelph Ontario, by 2018 Canadian politics and voters had not experienced a major shift towards environmental parties or policy, and instead had continued with business as usual. This is not entirely due to apathy, however, instead political structures, such as voting systems, party funding and incumbency restrict most forms of political change. This shows that when parties that represent the environment are successful, it is instead due largely to the specific alignment of political opportunity structures, government laws surrounding political parties, economic situations, and perhaps a little bit of luck.

This project now turns to a discussion of all of these themes, demographics and interviews combined. Where did 2018 Guelph adhere to previous markers of Green Party success, and where did it deviate? Recalling the general themes that accompanied Green party success (and limits) in western Europe, several were definitely at work in Guelph – namely the

effect of the economy, a first past the post voting system, party competition and funding.

Additionally, the effect of the leader of a party, from the Canadian literature, was also a factor in Guelph. The effects of post-materialism, neoliberalism, and environmental or social events were not as apparent, as discussed below, but what was most interesting were the new themes that were unique to the Guelph context.

Previous Themes

We definitely saw the theme of a strong economy at work in Guelph. In 2018 the city had low unemployment, a higher than average GDP, and had consistently been voted one of the top places to live and work in Canada. The broader economic picture of Ontario was also looking up, with positive predictions in the media reassuring citizens that their jobs and income were safe. Guelph in 2018 was therefore fertile ground for a Green Party to flourish, parallel to Green party success abroad and previously in Canada.

Interviewees noted this connection, stating that they knew that “if you're worried about being able to afford living” people will “probably [be] less likely to look for the Greens”, and that voters will only “think of things like you know the importance of environmental protections, when they're sort of more immediate economic needs are being met” [Interviewee 3, Interviewee 10]. One even went so far as to say using economic stability as a way to target other riding as potential Green party targets, noting that “beach heads for green victories will be high wealth rural areas” because “there's enough people with enough money to have the privilege to think enough about environment to say I can do something about it” very clearly drawing a line between economic success and Green opportunity [Interviewee 8]. Therefore, Guelph in 2018

aligned with previous research that shows that voters will feel comfortable voting Green when the economy is strong.

The broader theme of party competition, both external and internal, was also at work in Guelph in 2018. Internally, the party was all working together towards the goal of getting a Green MPP elected, with no squabbles or strife that the media could air and hurt their public image. Mike Schreiner was party leader of the GPO and so there was no issue of differing opinions between him as an MPP and the leader of the party – as the Guelph Conservative candidate struggled with. The GPO also benefitted from support from the Federal Green Party, with Federal leader Elizabeth May showing solid support for Schreiner while canvassing and attending rallies for him in Guelph (Green Party of Canada, 2018; Groleau, 2018).

Externally, the Green Party of Ontario and Mike Schreiner's stance on the intersection of the environment and the economy went far in combatting party competition from the competing parties in Guelph. Though all three alternate parties, Conservatives, Liberals and NDP, took an accommodative approach to the environment, it did not hurt the Green Party in Guelph, in fact it may have helped them – as studies have shown is possible in the past. This may have been because voters saw this accommodative stance as insincere, as one commented “the Conservatives will always vote in favor of the economy” and similarly with the NDP “if there is a conflict between what's good for labour and it was good for the environment, again, they would choose what's good for labour” [Interviewee 4]. This was even more apparent with interviewee's views of the Liberals: “they've turned their credibility with some you know Federal stories like the Trans mountain pipeline where it's like, you know a political party that I suppose, is environmental values shouldn't be approving this period, and should be like taking pains to point out to people that this is a dying business” [Interviewee 4].

Whereas the perceptions from interviewees was that the GPO and Schreiner had a fiscally responsible and balanced stance on environmentalism. Multiple interviewees, as noted previously, were drawn to the party due to this balance, and, as one interviewee commented “Mike, like when he talks about green energy, he does it with an environmental focus or with an economic focus. He says there’s billions in green energy and green jobs right and you know that’s smart, because it is something that’s top of mind for Canadians and most voting citizens” [Interviewee 3]. Another felt similarly about the party generally: “At the Ontario level with our policies, I think that the Green Party of Ontario is very, very strong on economic policies. And from a place of actually learning from experts and having economists look at things” [Interviewee 9].

What this shows us is that the GPO in Guelph was able to combat the major hurdle of party competition by showing that they were not only the best party to deal with environmental issues, but the best party to deal with a variety of issues and have the ability to incorporate issues beyond just ecology. Beyond the environment and the economy, interviewees praised the party for having a solid platform that additionally incorporated housing issues, disability rights and mental health, very clearly appealing to voters who were concerned with these issues as well. In this way, the Guelph Green party emulated the characteristics of a Rüdig (1985) “rainbow” Green party and drew support from a wider range of voters to win.

The voting system used in Guelph, first-past-the-post, was also a theme that was relevant to this specific context, but, interestingly, in a reverse way that what we see normally with Green parties. Here the FPTP model actually worked in the Green campaign’s favour, with volunteers using the rhetoric of “not wanting to waste your vote” on parties other than the Greens, especially as polls showed the Green party in the lead. As interviewees noted, the winner takes

all model helped them – the Green party in Guelph was polling as the winner, and everyone wanted to be on the winning team.

The effects of populism in Guelph, and its impact on the Green Party's emergence and success there, were similar to Green Parties nationally and globally. Though populism is a major political movement that has roots in both history and in present day politics, there was not any major evidence of it effecting the 2018 Green Party victory in Guelph. Though Schreiner did use populist rhetoric in his 2018 campaign occasionally, this work could find no evidence that the Green Party either intentionally harnessed, nor clashed up against, populism in any significant way.

Finally, party funding was a crucial theme at work in Guelph in 2018 as well. However, unlike the discussion previously, this funding was not solely from the government, but from private donors. As elucidated in chapter five both Mike Schreiner and the Green party in Guelph received far more money in donations than Green candidates in other Ontario ridings, meaning that the campaign in Guelph was well supported. This will be expanded on below.

From the Canadian analysis, the broader theme of leaders and leadership was also a crucial factor at work in Guelph at the time of the election. Mike Schreiner was well known in the Guelph community, and liked by many people, and according to interviews, this was not by accident. Schreiner and his team had worked hard for years leading up to the 2018 election to make sure he was a household name in the city. Given the stock Canadians put into their leaders at election time, this analysis posits that this popularity was a definite factor in the overall success of the party for the 2018 election.

Missing Themes

Four of the themes that had no visible impact in Guelph were postmaterialism, neoliberalism, populism, and a specific environmental or social movement. The first of these, postmaterialism, given that it is a broader socio-political phenomenon throughout Canada and Ontario, it is therefore not unique to the Guelph case study. Guelph is no doubt a post-materialist city, but since all cities in Canada would be, this factor is not a relevant theme when looking at why the Green party was successful in this city as compared to others in Canada and Ontario.

This is also similar to the theme of neoliberalism. Though this political approach was no doubt at play in Guelph, as the entire province of Ontario is affected by it, as a trajectory of contemporary politics it did not land locally as visible issue. This makes sense as those interviewed were not political scientists and therefore would not discuss or conclude with neoliberalism as a factor in the election, similarly, local and provincial media outlets did not engage in a discussion of neoliberalism in relation to the 2018 Ontario election.

Finally, the theme of Green party success as an outcome of a specific environmental protest or social movement was not the case in Guelph in 2018. Though this study found that Guelph has higher volunteering numbers than surrounding cities, and therefore the city may have been fertile ground for philanthropically inclined citizens to vote Green, there was no one specific event that led to either the founding or victory of the Provincial Green Party in Guelph in 2018.

So, we see that the Green party in Guelph both adhered to and departed from several of the pre-established themes and therefore was similar to other Green parties globally and nationally. However, by diving into the local campaign, conducting in-depth interviews, examining the particular demographic realities and campaign strategies, choices and context, we

can identify factors that could be seen as distinctive to the Guelph context. These themes were the local culture of Guelph, the campaign, the alignment of political opportunity, and funding, insights that would have been uncapturable without this form of inquiry.

The first of these distinctive themes is the local culture of Guelph – a variety of factors that suggest that Guelph was amenable to ‘green’ politics in 2018. Factors such as high volunteerism, a wealthy population, a history of environmental activism in the city, a highly educated populace from a university with an environmental and agricultural focus, green municipal politics and a focus on conservation and championing of green spaces, like dog parks, community gardens and city parks, in Guelph. Evidence of these can be found in both the demographic and historical facts of Guelph, as well as in the interviews conducted with Guelph citizens.

For example, the 2021 parks report found that Guelph had the highest percentage of volunteers per 1000 people than any other surrounding towns, which clearly plays out in the city having a history of high volunteerism in projects like the Speed River Cleanup. This philanthropic attitude was echoed and enforced in interviews, with 10 out of 12 participants involved in some sort of activism or volunteering themselves, and with several also attributing the Green party win to this high volume of volunteerism in Guelph. One interviewee noted that Guelph citizens just “[have] that mentality of participating in your community” [Interviewee 6].

Another example of the distinctive local culture of Guelph is its university. The history of Guelph shows us how the University of Guelph was key in establishing the city as a destination for students and businesses. Those interviewed posited that one of the keys to the success of a green party is a “strongly diverse university town” [Interviewee 8]. They also ascribed “a strong green presence” in the city to the university, saying that it comes from the courses taught there

and “the people that would be brought to the University and stay involved” [Interviewee 5]. Therefore, it is not simply the presence of the University in Guelph, but the type of university, the programs it specializes in, and subsequently, the people it attracts that makes it a unique piece of the local culture in Guelph.

The second distinctive theme for Guelph in 2018 was the deliberate way the Green party targeted their resources (both money and people) to the carefully chosen constituency of Guelph. This differs from the general theme of guaranteed party funding as government money was specifically allocated to the Guelph riding, and there was large amount of additional private donations to Schreiner and the Guelph campaign specifically. As mentioned previously, the Green party, along with all other registered parties that obtain a certain percentage of the vote, receive government funding. In 2017 the GPO received \$630,637.64 and in the first two quarters of 2018 they received \$295,785.80, which could be put towards party expenses. However, this funding is for all Green Party operations in Ontario, not just in Guelph, but given that Schreiner was leader of the party, that there were favourable conditions in Guelph, and that the campaign was strong, it can be assumed that a majority of that funding was funneled into Guelph.

This assumption is strongly backed by those interviewed and involved in the campaign. One confirmed that this funding “was all funneled into Guelph” and this is common with a campaign that was running a “leader or another high visibility candidate” [Interviewee 8]. Another noted that the Guelph campaign given everything that it needed “to do to get well and [be] fully funded” [Interviewee 6] and two others, when asked if Guelph was targeted financially by the larger Green party organization of Ontario as a riding answered simply “yes, definitely” [Interviewee 11 & 12].

In addition to government funding, the campaign in Guelph received much higher financial support from donations than other Green ridings leading up to and in 2018. This is significant as, even though the GPO received government funding, this amount was far less than the Ontario Liberals, Conservatives and NDPs, and alone would have put the Greens at a serious financial disadvantage even with government funding being pooled in Guelph. As noted in chapter five, Schreiner received the highest donations of any Green candidate in Ontario, totaling \$49,587.43 in 2018, and the [Guelph Green party also received contributions every year from 2014 to 2018, receiving 64 contributions in 2017 totalling \$36,424 and in 2018 they also received 64 contributions, this time totalling \$35,105.33.]

Guelph was also unique in the support it received in the form of volunteers, whose availability may reiterate the argument of Green voters being post-materialism. Green party supporters came “from out of province or in province” and “everyone was on board and moving forward in the same direction to get stuff done” [Interviewee 7, Interviewee 5]. The numbers were substantial with one interviewee recalling “we had hundreds of volunteers at that point. We had, you know, we were putting out 50 to 60 volunteers every day, hundreds on weekends” [Interviewee 6] meaning that the campaign could reach a substantial percentage of Guelph residents. This high volume of financial resources and peoplepower meant that the Guelph Green party was able to plan and execute the third distinctive theme in Guelph: an expansive campaign, as well as a well-funded long-term strategy leading up to that campaign period.

Another theme that was distinctive to the Guelph context was the way the party, the campaign, and Schreiner put down roots in the community, connected with locals and built up a profile. This was clearly executed through a long-term strategy that targeted Guelph as a potentially winnable riding for the Greens. This strategy began with Schreiner, then leader of the

GPO, switching from the riding of Simcoe-Grey to run in Guelph in 2014. Though he did not win in 2014, as the Green MPP of Guelph, Schreiner could attend community events, advocate for Guelph issues, and, seemingly most importantly, go door to door in Guelph to inquire about issues that Guelph citizens were concerned with and establish himself as a household name and face in the city.

Interviewees identified this long-term groundwork game as a key factor in winning the election in 2018. One person noted that “we literally spent like four years just doing that groundwork in Guelph” which consisted of volunteers going door to door “to hear from the community what are the issues important to [them]” [Interviewee 9, Interviewee 5]. This was called the “pre-engagement” for the campaign, which not only increased visibility of the Green party and Schreiner, but as the same interviewee notes, this “actually gave us a strong base. As for when the election came to say, hey, this is what Guelph...deemed as important” [Interviewee 5].

This work that was done before the campaign therefore set the party up for success during the campaign period. It meant that the majority of residents in Guelph at least were aware of Schreiner as a candidate, if they had not met him in person. A huge majority had also had the chance to meet a green party representative and hopefully have a positive view of them, considering they had canvassed neighbourhoods asking about resident’s concerns. One interviewee who was heavily involved in running the 2018 campaign supports this. They ask “How did we win? There's a bunch of structural and provincial level things, but I want to be super clear, that developing, refining, and iterating on a ground game is a hundred percent the answer” [Interviewee 8]. This pre-engagement and organization also meant that the organizers,

volunteers and overall Green campaign was set and ready to go when the writ dropped “whereas other campaigns typically are getting volunteers ready” [Interviewee 8].

The success of the Green Party in Guelph can therefore, at least partially, be attributed to the unique amount of preparation that went into the campaign there. This was a planned and deliberate strategy with one organizer explaining that “in any campaign I...my goal would be to have a thousand long signs go up the day that the writ drops...and we typically do them overnight. So they go at midnight...so when everybody wakes up they here the election is called, and all they see is lawn signs everywhere” [Interviewee 6] This is exactly what happened in Guelph – the Green campaign team wasted no time – with volunteers recalling that they were out the night the writ dropped putting up signs and the very next day knocking on doors [Interviewee 5].

The final theme that was unique to Guelph was the impact of the specific intersection between local and provincial political opportunity structure as it played out in that time and place. This intersection can be broken down into three parts: first, the lack of incumbent running in the Guelph riding; two, the amount the Liberal party of Ontario was disliked and the fact that Guelph had previously been a Liberal voting town; and three, how the Conservative and NDP candidates did not take the same advantage of this local opportunity structure in the way the Greens did.

The lack of an incumbent in a riding has been shown to be a significant advantage to other parties in the past (Abramowitz et al., 2006; Alexander, 2021; Baturo & Tolstrup, 2023; Cox & Katz, 1996; Gordon & Landa, 2009) and in Guelph it was no different. With Liberal MPP Liz Sandals stepping down it was a rare opportunity for another party to step in, a fact that was widely supported by those interviewed. Eight out of the twelve volunteers interviewed cited no

incumbent as a reason, if not *the* reason, for a Green Party win in Guelph. It was described as “creating a tail wind”, “certainly beneficial”, creating “the exact right sort of political climate in Guelph” and that the party “saw the opportunity there and jumped in with both feet” and “party took full advantage of it” [Interviewee 12; 7; 9; 4; 11]. One went so far as to say “my key strategic advice to any campaign [and] any green party is look for where there's no incumbent and overload your resources there and under load everyone else” [Interviewee 8].

However, given that Guelph had provincially voted Liberal since 2007, why did voters not simply turn to the next Liberal MPP? As noted previously, the candidate, Sly Castaldi, was well known and liked in the community. This is the crucial second part of the local political opportunity structure at the time – the Liberal Party of Ontario, and its leader Kathleen Wynne had fallen deeply out of favour with Ontarians which one interviewee argued “took them out of the running, even if they were a very qualified candidate” [Interviewee 3]. Another interviewee noted “There was also the sort of anger at Kathleen Wynne...so people were really looking to move their vote somewhere” [Interviewee 9].

Three interviewees also drew attention to the fact that Kathleen Wynne publicly announced on June 2, 2018, five days before the election, that the Liberal party would not form government and that Liberal supporters should “vote your heart” and “that if you don't think that your Liberal candidate will win, then use your vote the best way that you can” [Interviewee 8]. Though some thought that was incredibly brave of her, others commented that she “basically gave up” [Interviewee 9], either way, this may have released any remaining Liberal voters in Guelph to look elsewhere.

This meant that both the local variables of the city of Guelph, in addition to the more widespread variables of the province, aligned, however, this brings us to the third piece of the

opportunity structure puzzle. If there was no incumbent in a Liberal town, and the Liberal party was widely unliked and unlikely to win, why did the riding not go to the more established parties like the Conservatives or NDP. Guelph had at one point elected MPPs from both of these parties in the past, so why not in 2018? This project believes the answer to this part of the puzzle can be found in the campaigns. As noted above, the Guelph Greens and their candidate Mike Schreiner used extensive time and resources to put down roots and build an incredibly successful and far-reaching ground campaign in the Guelph riding. Both the Conservative and NDP campaigns did not take this advantage.

This, when combined with the local and provincial political situation, is what made Guelph unique. One interviewee sums it up by saying:

“So I think, for any Green to be elected, you need a perfect storm. Which means you need no incumbent...and so it frees up the Liberal [voters] to look. And Mike had done the hard work in the community. And then the GPO. From what I could see, was all over it, and they through all the resources involved...ran a very good campaign. The volunteers came out and supported Mike. And again, I think that's the work that Mike did prior to 2018 in the community. So it was a bit of a perfect storm” [Interviewee 11].

So we see that Guelph in 2018 adhered to several themes of Green party success that have been found abroad and previously in Canada, however, this most likely would not have been enough to secure a Green party victory there. Instead, it was a perfect storm of previously established themes, combined with unique circumstances specific to that city at that time that created a victory. As these themes are identifiable, there is every possibility that a win like this could be replicated, and that this framework could be applied to other Green parties or smaller/third parties. This project also shows us that Green parties in Canada merit their own

study, as they are distinct from both Green parties in the EU and Australasia, as well as from third parties abroad and in Canada. This, along with discussing the value of extending this approach to the other federal and provincial victories of Greens in BC, Ontario, PEI and New Brunswick, will be examined in this project's conclusion.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The climate crisis and the political response to it will most likely be one of the most significant concerns for our world in the next decade. Migration, international relations, affordability and democracy will all be determined by environmental factors, and the world we leave to future generations will depend on our response to this crisis. However, the climate crisis is not just the concern of environmentalists. It is a complex, multi-layered issue that requires an intersectional and multi-disciplinary response. By siloing our knowledge and keeping within the strict boundaries of our respective disciplines, we risk a disjointed and ineffective approach that leaves the most vulnerable behind.

As such, this work is just one small part of the overall picture. The hope is that this research and literature will inform both the academic and extra-institutional response to the climate crisis and can be used as a basis for further study. It is also the hope of this work that it will be used in tandem with other research – social, theoretical, psychological, etc. – to be just one part of the puzzle. It is important to underline that the focus of this research methodologically has been explanatory rather than predictive, where the point has been to fill in the context against which political competition takes place at various scales: comparative, national, provincial, and local.

This research began with the question “Why Guelph” and in answering, examined global factors of Green party emergence and success. The answer from European and Australasian parliamentary systems was six part, pointing to the economy, the political systems, a post-materialist society and, to a lesser extent, to party funding, party competition and environmental or social events in each country. This answer both changed and remained the same when inquiry turned to the federal Green Party of Canada. The need for a robust economy and funding in a

post-materialist society remained, and the hinderance or help of a first-past-the-post voting system was just as poignant in Canada as its global parliamentary counterparts.

The key insights generated by this study show both consistencies and contrasts with broader trends in international and domestic politics. Global Green parties in parliamentary systems rely and succeed based on a positive economic situation, political systems that include some form of proportional representation, a post-materialist society, guaranteed party funding, positive outcomes of party competition, and, in many cases, a large environmental or social movement to spark political organization. Canadian Green parties also rely on most of these factors, yet they came into being much later and have not seen the success of their international counterparts despite the presence of most of these elements within Canadian society.

This failure of Green politics at the polls is not due to Canadian voters' lack of interest in supporting climate action. As my review of the literature and first person mixed-methods analysis has shown, this lag is due to the absence of three major factors, namely 1) proportional representation, 2) party funding, and 3) political opportunity structure. These first two elements are crucial to Green party success, and the Green party of Ontario was only able to succeed due to huge private monetary fundraising to compensate for a lack of guaranteed party funding, and despite the first-past-the-post system in the province.

The third major factor that this research has shown to be crucial to Green party success is the opportunity structure. Guelph in 2018 was a perfect combination of political structures, both federally and provincially, to gain success. There was no incumbent in Guelph, and negative provincial attitudes towards the Liberal party for this election all but disqualified the Guelph Liberal candidate. This, combined with the City of Guelph's historical support for Liberal parties, the dislike for the Conservative Leader Doug Ford, and a notably higher level of support

for Green candidates provincially compared to similar constituencies across the province, also put Mike Schreiner far ahead of the Guelph Conservative candidate.

From this analysis of Mike Schreiner's win in 2018 in Guelph, it can be deduced that, in the absence of proper political structures that support international Green Party success, Canadian Green parties require an alignment of several unstable factors at just the right moment to achieve political success. While the insight of this project can shed light on the success factors needed by Canadian Green parties, this analysis is necessarily restricted to the realm of the political. It is evident that in order to combat the climate crisis, politics is one piece of a complex puzzle.

There is much work to do still. A significant gap in this study concerns Indigenous ways of knowing. Given that official Green Party website states that they "begin with the basic premise that all life on the planet is interconnected and that humans have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world", they would find commonalities with Indigenous worldviews (2025). An investigation into official Green party partnerships with Indigenous nations in Canada has yet to be conducted but would be extremely beneficial. Climate crimes are virtually undeterred and policies to address these harms are severely lacking in our contemporary moment, hailed by many experts as too little too late. Using Indigenous worldviews of the human and non-human right to a healthy life creates a path forward in protecting Canadian ecology. This would be a step towards decolonizing academic, environmental and political work.

Within the discipline of political science alone, many lines of inquiry still remain. Though there is work that looks at Green Party performance generally, in certain elections and at a wide scale (Camcastle, 2022; Pammett & Dornan, 2020), there has yet to be a similar in-depth exploration of their success in any other riding. Jenica Atwin's 2019 win in Fredericton, New

Brunswick, or Paul Manly's victory and retention of office from 2019 to 2021 in Nanaimo-Ladysmith, British Columbia are two federal examples. A look into demographics, political history, campaign histories, and provincial particularities may uncover interesting similarities and divergences to Ontario.

Speaking of Ontario, the federal Green Party win for Mike Morris in the city of Kitchener would also serve as a comparative project – to both Guelph as a city and to Atwin and Manly's wins in other provinces. Mike Morris, a business and computer electronic graduate from Wilfred Laurier University, ran for the federal seat in Kitchener and won in 2021 (Russwurm, 2019). As this was after Mike Schreiner's win in Guelph, Schreiner campaigned with Morris, and many of the volunteers from Guelph lent a hand in that campaign (Bueckert, 2021; Ferguson, 2024). This campaign and subsequent win would be an ideal opportunity to make a provincial comparison to the factors identified to be important in Guelph. This comparative data may detect the actors unique to Canada, and, in comparison to the PEI and BC campaigns, unique to Ontario.

Narrowing this comparative scope further, in 2023, provincial Green party MPP Aislinn Clancy was elected in a by-election for Kitchener Centre. Not only does this provide an opportunity of a true comparison for MPPs in Ontario, but it also provides an opportunity for a comparative project to determine if a city matters more than other factors. Clancy was elected after Schreiner and Morris, so an examination of contagious Green support could be raised, as well as a comparison on southwestern Ontario generally versus other areas of the province. Clancy also won via by-election, allowing for a conversation to be raised about this being a potential route for combatting the negative effects of first-past-the-post voting struggles that the

Green Party faces. Clancy also served as a city councilor before running in the provincial election, and this could be a factor to consider in her popularity and win.

Clancy's tenure as city councilor brings this call for further research to the municipal field. Municipal leaders make decisions regarding services from waste disposal and public transit to fire services, public health services, community centres and city recreation (parks and paths), and yet there has yet to be a comprehensive study on the effect of "green" city leaders. Councilors, board members, and mayors can be crucial to a city's ecological focus and affect as they are key in environmental initiatives such as recycling projects and park and green space curation. Karen Farbridge in Guelph, for example, was quoted as being a "Green" mayor that "worked really hard" to make Guelph a green sustainable city [Interviewee 11]. A comparative project examining the municipal leaders in Green-leaning cities may discover a link between municipal leadership and provincial and federal party support and is crucial to the wider political conversation.

These connections are important to political literature, as evidenced by their study elsewhere. Mjelde et al., (2016) studied the 2015 local Norwegian elections and their effect on the county's Green party, Pink et al. (2017) studied the relation between municipal factors and support for Czech green party, and Hooghe et al. (2010) did the same with local Belgium elections to explain the Green vote. Other studies have taken a more broad approach, looking at examples of green policies generally at a municipal level and how they affect larger political changes (Castán Broto, 2017; Cidell, 2015).

Another place where this research could continue is in an exploration of the connection between gender and Green parties. Globally, there have been several studies that examine this, but none so far in Canada. A Canadian study would be a valuable addition to this body of

research as different studies have had differing results. For example, Vasilopoulos and Demertzis (2013) found no correlation between gender and green voting in their study of Greek elections, neither did Beaudonnet & Vasilopoulos in the 2014 study of the French Green voter in the 2012 presidential election, nor did Hooghe et al. (2010) in their analysis of Belgium local elections. However, in 2012 Clements found that “individuals in Britain who show pro-environmental beliefs and behaviour are more likely to be female, older, well-educated, have a level of religiosity, support the Liberal Democrats and interested in political matters” (Clements, 2012, p. 918). Finding out where Canada sits in the correlation between gender and voting Green would add to this body of research.

Perhaps then a country-by-country analysis of correlation between gender and Green party support is not comprehensive, and Canada should be included in the studies that survey multiple countries. In these, gender was found to be a factor. For example, Carter (2013) in studying the possibility of a “homogeneous Green party family” used the data from 237 parties in 24 European Union (EU) member states and 55 countries’ party manifestos and found that “Green parties still look different from other parties: many retain a form of collective leadership, have joint male and female spokespersons, while women make up around half of every national Green parliamentary group” and that “[c]ompared to supporters of other parties, Green voters were younger and better educated, less attached to the dominant Christian churches and (except in Ireland and Luxembourg) more likely to be female and urban dwellers” 80. Dolezal (2010) found this as well in the comparative analysis of 12 Western European countries: “everywhere but in Ireland and Luxembourg female voters are overrepresented in the Green electorate” (544)

Another yet-unstudied factor of Green party exceptionality is the gender make-up of the parties themselves. Hartshorn-Sanders (2006), Horvat & Tomašević (2012), and Carter (2013) all

found that not only did Green parties have higher numbers of female members, they were also more likely to have co-leadership roles, allowing for women to gain access to the highest levels of the organizations. Whether this is because the Green party attracts more women naturally, or whether this is due to specific recruitment practices, such as the case in France where Camille (2021) traced the candidate recruitment process that took place in the French party Europe Ecology ahead of the 2014 European elections, remains to be seen.

The lack of Canadian focus on gender is surprising given that the Green Party of Canada is the only party with an elected female leader, Elizabeth May, and this has been the case since she was elected leader in 2006. Additionally, the federal Green Party has had women make up 50% of their elected officials, as does the Ontario provincial party currently. Indeed, in the 2019 PEI provincial election, PEI became “the first province in Canada with a Green Party Official Opposition. Five of the Green’s eight MLAs are women, so this is also the first Official Opposition party in Canada with a majority of females” (Desserud, 2019). This link between gender and Green party membership has been analyzed elsewhere, such as Summers (2015) who discusses the entangled history of the women’s movement and the Green movement in Germany, but no such study has been done in Canada (Jackson, 2017).

Additionally, though it is not yet officially recognized by their party’s constitution, in 2022 Elizabeth May ran and was elected as party leader as part of a joint ticket with Jonathan Pedneault. The party is working to update their constitution, and this again is a novelty in Canadian history, but is in line with Green parties abroad, such as Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck for the German Greens, and Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay for The Green Party of England and Wales (Kefferpütz, 2022; Williams, 2006). For the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand having a co-leader is a requirement. Starting in 1995, the party required

one male and one female co-leader, a requirement that was changed to one co-leader being female and one being Māori in 2022 (it is not required that these conditions be fulfilled by two different people) (Whyte, 2022). An intersectional feminist lens, one which realizes the realities of colonization and gender-based discrimination, to examine this phenomenon is sorely needed in the study of Canadian politics.

While successful campaigns warrant study, there is also credence to be given to the study of unsuccessful campaigns. A research project that pulls together information about campaigns that fail at a local level will give valuable insight to the differences between success and failure for the Green party, federally, provincially and municipally. Currently, Canadian political research has no “one-stop shop” for Green challenges at all levels and of all outcomes, and creating one would no doubt contribute to the literature on third-party challenges, campaign strategies, voting studies and much more. What’s more, comparing unsuccessful campaigns to the successful ones has the potential to further solidify the themes of emergence and success that Green parties seem to adhere to, both in Canada and globally.

Another area of research is into the political partisanship of Green voters. At the current moment, it is unknown where voters come from when they vote Green. What parties do they abscond from, if they abscond at all? Are they previously non-voters? Liberals? NDPs? Studies like these have been done elsewhere, such as McGuinness's 2023 analysis of Green between-party movement in Northern Ireland, and Barber & Klassen's 2021 article on the effect of party competition by the Australian Greens.

Tranter & Smith (2019) took this analysis further and studied Green identification and movement in Australia, finding that “parental political affiliation (especially maternal affiliation) strongly influences Greens party identification as it does for the major parties”. They also found

that “Greens are less likely than major party identifiers to exhibit stable party allegiances over time” and that “defections between Greens and Labor are also far more likely than between these parties and conservative parties (Liberals or Nationals)”, however, they conclude that “inter-generational transmission of Greens identity should translate into a relatively stable electoral base for the Greens, helping ensure they remain an influential presence in Australian federal politics” (Tranter & Smith, 2019:1281).

There is also an argument to be made that Green parties and their message to promote sustainable living have appeal to traditionally Conservative voters in Canada. The environmental movement, in fact, has its beginnings in the conservation efforts of the early 1900s when “conservationists aimed to slow the rapid depletion of Canadian resources in favour of more regulated management” (James-Abra & Hummel, 2022). This was especially true in Guelph in 2018, when the provincial Liberals were so unliked, but various sources noted that Guelph citizens were very opposed to voting Conservative. Schreiner commented on this throughout his 2018 campaign, as well as his subsequent 2022 campaign, noting that the provincial Green Party appealed to Conservative leaning voters “who don't like the fact that the current conservative movement denies climate change or certainly doesn't have any indication that they're going to address the climate crisis, and are attracted to a party that's going to be bold, ambitious and honest about how we can do it and do it in a way that benefits our economy” (CBC News, 2022).

This potential correlation between Conservative voters and Green voters has been studied elsewhere, with varied results. In Australia Forgas & Jolliffe (1994) investigated how, throughout history, the “emergence of environmentalism as a social force of some consequence occurred precisely at a time when the attitudes by the general public were becoming increasingly conservative” and in a cross-national analysis of 19 countries, Nawrotzki found that “in less

developed countries, and countries characterized by poor environmental quality, conservatives are more environmentally concerned than liberals” (Forgas & Jolliffe, 1994:124; Nawrotzki, 2012:286). Barnett et al. found that in the United States, though “political conservatism was associated with lower pro-environmental attitudes”, “politically conservative individuals may have greater concern for future life and thereby have more pro-environmental attitudes even while having lower pro-environmental attitudes overall” meaning that “pro-environmental messages may be more persuasive for conservatives if they are linked to concerns about future generations” (Barnett et al., 2019:647).

Analyzing voters swing to, and just as importantly, the swing away, from the Green party will provide important insights into Canadian voter preference, deference and partisanship. One election that would be perfect for such a study would be the Federal election of 2008. In that year, the Green party of Canada received almost one million (941,097) votes country wide. However, in the previous election of 2006 they had only received 665,940, and in the following election in 2011 their numbers dropped to 576,221. Knowing where those voters came from, and where they went, would be valuable not only for the Green Party, but for all Canadian parties and political scientists.

And finally, there remains a gap in the literature surrounding the impetus, campaign and breakthrough of Elizabeth May. Though this project briefly touched on her history, the political analysis of one of Canada’s most successful female politicians has yet to be completed. Looking at her campaigns, both unsuccessful and successful, her reach, locations and impact politically, has roots in environmental politics, intersectional politics, third party politics, and feminist analysis, to name but a few. For example Richter (2015) who uses the “biography of the activist

and Green Party co-founder Petra Kelly in order to rethink the Greens' founding process and to articulate a new conception of charismatic political leadership" (80).

Another line of inquiry into understanding the etiology of environmental concern, and subsequently potential political support for Green parties, is personality traits. Brick & Lewis (2016) conducted a study in the United States which used "a specific type of environmental behavior, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to clarify which personality correlates are most robustly associated with behavior, and to test mediation of those effects through attitudes" and found that the traits of Openness, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion were most strongly predictive of emissions reducing behaviour. (Brick & Lewis, 2016: 635). Similar studies have been conducted by Fatke, (2017) in a cross-national study and Routley & Ii, (2024) in Canada. These studies could be used to add to studies on voter demographics.

Environmentalism and environmental concern has not been reflected in the study of Canadian political science at a level necessary to acknowledge that this is a crisis. The research has not been done, even though the global change in temperatures has been acknowledged by municipal governments in Canada as a climate emergency and the mechanics of politics and their study is essential to addressing climate change. Reigning in multi-billion dollar corporations and companies who do irreparable damage to our environment is the responsibility of government and policies surrounding water protection, unchecked growth, air pollution, water table management etc. are all in the realms of political policy and the study of where and when these policies are changed to address this crisis is what is necessary to understand and address these issues.

Therefore, though this inquiry concluded that climate anxiety is not sufficient on its own to create meaningful political change, this is a factor that, as political scientists, we cannot

ignore. More research and study must be dedicated to the political effects and outcome of our climate emergency, at all levels of government. We know that climate anxiety is not all that is needed for political change, but once that change occurs, what effect do political changes have on the environment? Can robust policy, implemented by motivated political actors, slow down or even reverse environmental damage? Is the political arena the best place to address these concerns? The climate crisis is only worsening and to properly prepare for and address this, robust political inquiry into all the questions and facets of policy must be studied.

Outside of the discipline of political science, it is the hope that this research can be used as a tool to inform both environmentally concerns citizens and politicians of the most effective strategies for positive policy change. A robust understanding of the financial, local, personal and national reasons for a Green Party's success or failure can be used to assist activists who choose to approach the climate crisis from a political standpoint. It can also be used to complement the research of other disciplines, illuminating the reasons for certain impasses that arise. For example: environmental studies that conclude that the climate crisis is inevitable and pressing can explain why Canadian political policy does not reflect this urgency by leaning on this research.

Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent form for Interviews

Date: _____

Study Name: A Climate for Change? Green Party Success in Guelph, Ontario

Researcher name:

- Evangeline Kroon, Doctoral Candidate in Political Science, York University, Principal Investigator
- Contact details: ekroon@yorku.ca

Purpose of the Research:

- The purpose of this research is to answer why and how the Green Party of Ontario was so successful in Guelph in the 2018 provincial election, and if this success is sustainable.
- In addition to comparative, academic and demographic data about Guelph, this project will include interviews of relevant actors knowledgeable about the 2018 Green party campaign in Ontario and Guelph. Interview responses will be transcribed and whole or partial answers will appear in a final published dissertation. Identities will not be attributed to specific statements unless otherwise requested.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

- You will be asked a series of open-ended questions related to your participation in and knowledge about the Green Party and the 2018 Green party campaign. You may fully or partially answer the questions and discuss any related topics. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts:

- We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.
- However, since this is a small population of interviewees, we must highlight that there is a possibility that you may be identified based on your answers even if they choose to remain anonymous. Please know by signing this form you are fully acknowledging and consenting to this possibility.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

- By participating in this study, you can contribute to a greater knowledge of voting behaviour, Green party success, and third party success in Canada.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality:

- Data will be collected by recording video or audio discussions on Zoom/Skype. All data will be stored under lock and key and/or password protected on a computer. Any data kept in the cloud will be in a secure server. Data will be kept for ten years, until September 2, 2031, and then destroyed.

- This study will use Zoom or Skype to collect data, which is an externally hosted cloud-based service. When information is transmitted over the internet privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). Further, while York University researchers will not collect or use IP addresses or other information which could link your participation to your computer or electronic devices without informing you, there is a small risk with any platform such as this of data that is collected on external servers falling outside the control of the research team. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements (where possible) for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please contact Evangeline Kroon for further information.
- Recordings (audio/video) will be saved in a password protected file to research team members' local computer, not the cloud based service.
- Please note that it is the expectation that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.
- Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.
- Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only the researcher will have access to this information.
- Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research?

If you have questions about this research project or your role in the study please contact the researcher, Evangeline Kroon (ekroon@yorku.ca) or the researcher's supervisor, Dennis Pilon (dpilon@yorku.ca).

You may also contact the Department of Political Science with concerns:
Graduate Program in Political Science, 6th Floor Ross Building
York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Phone: (416) 736-2100

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in "A Climate for Change? Green Party Success in Guelph, Ontario" conducted by Evangeline Kroon. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____
Participant

Date _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Principal Investigator

Additional consent (where applicable)

1. Audio recording

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

2. Video recording

☐ I consent to the video-recording of my interview(s).

3. Audio Transcription

☐ I consent to the audio-transcribing of my interview(s).

4. Follow-up Interview(s).

☐ Do you consent to be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview? Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
Participant: (name)

5. Consent to waive anonymity:

I, _____ consent to the use of my name in the publications arising from this research.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Confirm consent

Introduce self and project

Open ended interview so apologies if I repeat some questions

f/u interview?

Any questions?

Green Party

Can you tell me a little bit about your journey to getting involved in the green party

What is your position with the Green Party? How are you involved?

How long have you been involved with the Green party?

What motivated you/Why did you decide to go into politics with the Green party?

Were you part of Mike's 2018 campaign?

Was there a point in the campaign where you thought oh we are going to win this?

Was there an event that turned the tide?

Why Guelph? Why Then? Why Greens at this time?

-is there anything that people can take away

-even nothing is a finding

-accidental opening

-opponents

What do you think is key to a successful Green party campaign?

Are these keys to success any different with other political parties?

Unique or distinct about campaigns you were in?

Was there a unique factor that lead to break through?

Local result?

Did the party just get lucky?

Can you speak to any differences between Mike and your campaigns?

People specific

- leaders: did you know if the Green party targeted certain ridings?
- what would go into these decisions
- what things would be done to target? Money? Volunteers? Etc.

Have you ever attended/been a part of any social movements, events or protests?
 -if so, when, where, what, how many?

F/U: Where any of those key moments in the lead up to the 2018 provincial election?

Have you ever worked/volunteered/supported a different political party?
 -party competition

Why did you decide to get involved politically versus (or in addition to) other organizations (NGO's, Sierra Club etc.)

What do you think are the biggest challenges for the Green Party in obtaining support and votes?
 -voting systems
 -party competition
 -party funding

What do you think is the main reason Canadians decide to vote for the Green party?

Do you feel like there is any relationship between Green party success/lack thereof and the economy at large?

Do economic problems help/hurt the green party?

Guelph

Do you live in Guelph? If so, for how long? Why did you decide to move to Guelph?

Have you been involved with the Green party anywhere outside of Guelph?

Why do you think the Green Party was so successful in Guelph in 2018?

Were there any social movements or civil society organizations that lent their support to Mike's 2018 campaign?

Environmental Event

If environmental concern is what led to you to support the GP, when did you first become concerned about the environment? Why?

Is there anybody else you think I should talk to?

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