

**SELLING GOVERNMENT:
THE EVOLUTION OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS IN
ALBERTA FROM 1971-2006**

by

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Abstract

The public relations practices of the government of Alberta have elicited substantial controversy, particularly under the administration of Premier Klein. However existing analyses have been insufficiently comparative. This dissertation is a within-case comparison of the evolution of government public relations practices under the three Progressive Conservative administrations of Premiers Lougheed, Getty and Klein. The theoretical framework rejects democratic justifications for government public relations, but accepts an “administrative imperative” that recognizes the use of government public relations techniques to accomplish particular policy goals. At the same time, it recognizes that these practices are often linked to important transformations in the broader political economy. A model of incentives and opportunities of why politicians use public relations strategies to accomplish their goals is introduced to examine the particular evolution in the Alberta case. Premier Lougheed’s administration created a new public relations agency dedicated to improving the administrative efficiency of the government’s public relations function. It was marked by restrained forms of government advertising and a documented commitment to a distinct space for government public relations, insulated from the political demands of the elected level of government. Periodic television appearances by the premier appear to be the most aggressive forms of public relations activities. Premier Getty adopted this model, despite a substantially transformed political environment and despite documented advice to change his government’s practices. Premier Klein recognized this transformed political landscape and substantially reformed government public relations, increasing public

opinion research, adopting manipulative and aggressive news management tactics, politicizing and centralizing the public relations staff and integrating the entire range of public relations techniques into regular politically contentious advertising campaigns. These reforms help to explain some of Premier Klein's political and policy successes. The dissertation concludes with some of the deleterious consequences of extensive public relations practices by governments in Canada and some recommendations as to how to mitigate against those consequences.

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Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to describe and explain the evolution of the government of Alberta's public relations activities during the administrations of Premiers Peter Lougheed (1971-1985), Don Getty (1985-1992) and Ralph Klein (1992-2006). No Canadian provincial government has elicited as much public controversy about the way it communicates information as Premier Ralph Klein's administration. In the middle of Klein's first term, just after he had dramatically reduced spending and privatized public services, Kevin Taft (1997) dedicated two chapters of his highly successful polemical tract, *Shredding The Public Interest*, to the Klein government's communications strategies. One chapter in particular examined the transformed role for the government's central public relations agency, the Public Affairs Bureau, as an integral element in the Klein government's success.

Premier Peter Lougheed formed this central agency in 1972 to provide communications and public relations services to government departments and information to citizens. Through its history, it has taken on very different faces and responsibilities and these will be examined in turn. It was originally unique among Canadian governments in that departmental public relations staff were hired by, and accountable to, a central agency and then seconded to departments to work under deputy ministers.

According to Taft, Premier Klein further centralized and politicized the Public Affairs Bureau by making it accountable to the Office of the Premier for the first time in its

history. Supposedly, this increased the political character of government public relations and contributed to the Klein's government's political successes. His book is marked with grandiose claims, such as the following: "With this stroke, he [Klein] became head of a vast network that reached throughout the civil service, but was parallel to it. This increases the ability of his office to control the government and influence the media and the public" (1997, 79). Similar allegations are made in a partially critical biography of Klein and his time as premier.

One of the first things Klein did after being sworn in as Alberta's twelfth premier was anoint himself Minister of Truth. Not in so many words, perhaps, but he did take a scattered, fragmented collection of underutilized flacks reporting to the public works minister and construct a hierarchical organization of advanced communications expertise. They were backed by state-of-the-art technology, and his name was at the apex of the pyramid on its organizational chart. The staff christened it the 'Ministry of Truth'; officially it was called the Public Affairs Bureau (Martin 2002, 134).

Moreover, Sampert (2005) studied the Public Affairs Bureau from a more scholarly perspective. She argued that the agency, in combination with restrictions to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, contributed to an unhealthy restriction of information under the Klein government.

Taken together, these contributions comprise a form of public allegation against the Klein government that its public relations practices were particularly aggressive, questionable and central to his government's political success. At the same time, the degree to which the Klein government engaged in anything unique is unclear, given an earlier examination of government public relations under Premier Lougheed. Epp (1984)

argued that Premier Lougheed's news management practices were integral to the Lougheed government's secretive tendencies. Moreover, Epp noted that the centralized Public Affairs Bureau was a tool for the government to disseminate its political message. "The Bureau as a whole represents part of a highly centralized approach to news management, which borrows heavily from the advanced public relations techniques developed in the corporate world from which Lougheed and many of his ministers have come" (Epp 1984, 37). He criticized the Bureau for its resources (human and financial) noting that its budget for 1982-1983 was \$8.4 million and its staff complement was 200 employees, 70 of whom were public relations specialists. Epp's observations are strikingly similar to those observations made by Taft, Sampert and Martin. The Public Affairs Bureau is large (and presumably influential), centralized (and presumably tightly controlled) and politicized (and presumably engaged in activities inappropriate for a civil servants).

However, each of these three studies has particular blind spots that raise important questions about the accuracy of some of the claims made about government public relations in the province of Alberta. One problem is the lack of empirical evidence introduced for some of these accounts. For example, Taft's section on the Public Affairs Bureau incorporates two footnotes, neither of which support passages such as the one quoted above. Martin's account is journalistic in nature and relies only on direct quotes from participants and the author's experience in the provincial press gallery. Moreover, Epp mistakenly quoted a study of the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau commissioned by the government of Manitoba (Wepler, Bannister, and Cohen 1982) and reported on by the

Winnipeg *Free Press* which described the PAB as “one of the strongest communications organizations in North America.” However, the original report provided to the government of Manitoba was referring to an internal training program the PAB had developed to train government public relations professionals. The report argued that this program would, *in future*, turn the PAB into “one of the strongest communications organizations in North America” (Wepler, Bannister and Cohen 1982, 85). It was speculation or prediction on the part of the report’s authors, not observation as Epp and the Winnipeg *Free Press* had reported.

Also, each study has a very limited comparative context. This leads to questionable observations that lack context and are not very persuasive. Consider how the different studies introduce the budget of the Public Affairs Bureau, invariably to imply that the organization is large, well resourced and, therefore, influential. Epp complained that the PAB had a budget of \$8.4 million in 1982-1983. But is that a large or a small amount of financial resources? At the time, the provincial government budget was approximately \$12 billion. From that perspective, an \$8.4 million budget for public relations for an entire government seems insignificant. Similarly, the financial data that Sampert cites as evidence of the expansion of public relations activities under Premier Klein, are not compared with the Lougheed and Getty governments. For example, she noted that in 1998-1999 the PAB budget was \$8.6 million (presumably in 1999 dollars, it is not clear from the text); four years later, it had grown to \$13 million (presumably in 2003 dollars) (2005, 43). This is meant to suggest, of course, that the PAB exerts considerable influence over the media and public opinion. And yet, 14 years earlier, Epp was

bemoaning a budget of \$8.4 million in 1984 dollars, a far larger amount than the relatively paltry sum of \$8.6 million in 1999 dollars.

If financial budgets for the Public Affairs Bureau are linked to its influence, then the organization should have been much weaker under Premier Klein than under Premier Lougheed. However, if this is the case, then most of the commentary and concern about the organization under Premier Klein is misplaced. But if the concerns about public relations under Premier Klein are valid and that government really did adopt questionable practices, these may not be captured by concerns about how much money governments dedicate to these activities. Either way, there is a need for clarification and more investigation.

The situation is further clouded based on *prima facie* observations of contemporary developments in the field of government public relations in other jurisdictions, where similar concerns about the expansion, centralization and politicization of government public relations are also evident. Much of this literature comes from the United Kingdom. As early as 1994, Deacon and Golding examined the role that government public relations played in the introduction of the poll tax in Great Britain. There, they argued that one of the reasons the policy failed was because authoritative news sources in local governments were available to journalists to dispute the central government's claims about the consequences of the poll tax. More broadly, they identified the rise of what they call "the public relations state." "The marketing of government activity has become a central activity of statecraft. Inevitably, the launch of any major initiative will

be devised with this apparatus of promotion and information management in mind” (Deacon and Golding 1994, 6-7).

Attention to government public relations in the United Kingdom reached a fever pitch after Tony Blair became prime minister. One of his government’s early administrative measures was to give politically appointed special advisors the right to manage civil service staff. This led to an ongoing debate about the power and influence within the British government of “spin doctors” and the prime minister’s director of communications.¹ These concerns culminated in political controversy when questions were raised about whether military intelligence was manipulated to support the government’s pre-existing desire to invade Iraq. One consequence of the controversy was an independent inquiry into practices of government communication (the Phillis Inquiry).

That inquiry examined the consequences of the increased power and status of politically appointed “special advisors” within the civil service as an important dimension of a transformed relationship between elected politicians and government public relations. It noted:

¹ Jones (2001) is a book-length treatment of the spin practices of the Blair government.

Special advisers have come to be a valued part of the government machine. They can be involved in political issues and party debate in a way that is debarred to civil servants, and where their role is clear and relations are good they enhance government communications. Many of them concentrate their limited time on the political reporters in the ‘lobby’ and on a handful of specialists. We have been told that this has created an ‘inner circle’ of reporters who have good access, but a disenfranchised majority who do not. This can leave reporters dealing with a sometimes poorly informed and demoralized [departmental] press operation. The way some have operated has also led to a blurring of information and comment (United Kingdom. Government communications review group 2003, 10).

The same inquiry quoted a journalist as follows:

The present elision of political and civil service information is benefiting no one. In the short term it gives the government more ‘wiggle room’ because no one knows where they stand. But in the long run it has damaged the credibility of government statements, including denials of allegations against it (Bolton quoted in United Kingdom. Government communications review group 2003, 10).

In 2006, spurred by the same concerns about the manipulation of intelligence and information prior to the Iraq War, the annual edition of the *Socialist Register* was published under the title *Telling the Truth* (Panitch and Leys 2006). In it, Leys identifies the rise of spin doctors in the British government as the sign of a “cynical state” that is a precondition of neoliberal democracy.

The crucial roles are played neither by political parties nor by civil servants but by personnel seconded into the civil service from the private sector, a handful of 'special advisers' to the prime minister, a small group of certified market-friendly civil servants, and polling, advertising and media experts. Scientific evidence is still relied on, but only in so far as it serves competition policy; otherwise it is treated uncritically, if it helps the government, and dismissed if it does not. When this new policy regime is properly understood the lies about Iraq no longer appear as a special case, but only as a special dimension of a general one. Cynicism, we realize, is a necessary condition of neoliberal democracy (Leys 2006).

These concerns are not restricted to the United Kingdom. In the United States, the Bush administration's public relations practices have come under scrutiny. The congressional Government Accountability Office ruled that the Bush administration violated a statutory ban on producing domestic propaganda when it released video news releases clothed as independently-produced news stories and distributed them for broadcast to television stations (United States. Government Accountability Office. 2005). Separately, the way that the *New York Times*' Judith Miller abused journalistic conventions to protect the identity of sources not to defend a whistleblower protesting wrongdoing, but to protect the identity of a high government official conspiring to identify an undercover intelligence officer, raised profound questions about the relationships between government sources, journalists and the norms that supposedly govern them.

The Canadian Public Relations Society defines public relations as "the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance" (2008). Cottle defines public

relations as “the deliberate management of public image and information in pursuit of organizational interests” (2003, 3). Despite the various definitions, there are three core characteristics that form the bedrock of what people mean when they speak of “public relations.” First, public relations is an activity that is predicated on creating the impression that an organization’s activities are in the public interest; it is not predicated on ascertaining or negotiating any kind of public interest. Second, there is a heavy emphasis on the image and the perception of an organization, rather than substantive discourse. Third, and finally, public relations is a professional activity, codified in professional organizations and paid for by those with sufficient resources. The major activities of public relations include public opinion research, print, radio, television advertising and news management tactics.

There are three processes that are common to most observations about the transformation of government public relations and the rise of what Deacon and Golding call the public relations state: the expansion of public relations resources, the politicization of those resources and the centralization of those resources in the administrative apparatus of the state. This section specifies precisely what is meant by these three processes and identifies how each has been applied in studies of government public relations.

The expansion of public relations resources simply refers to the sheer increase in resources, both human and financial, dedicated to public relations functions. Generally speaking, this expansion raises concerns about an increased capacity of elites to dominate the news media in particular and public opinion in general. Gandy (1982) argued that

actors influence the newsgathering and news production process by providing “information subsidies.” If journalists are rational actors, they have an incentive to minimize costs involved in the production of news. If news sources can provide journalists with information and materials necessary for the production of news, they can influence that process. The press release, written to imitate newspaper text, is the classic example of the information subsidy, but the idea of the information subsidy can be extended to anything needed to produce news, such as office space or easy access to newsworthy sources.

Davis (2002) refined this analysis by arguing that the effects of increased public relations resources could only be understood by including a parallel process of declining newsroom resources within the news media.² The core of his argument is that the expansion of public relations resources through the 1980s, 1990s and the 21st century has occurred at the same time as news media organizations began to dedicate less and less resources to newsgathering. This latter process is driven by the global trend to turn formerly independent media outlets into chains in the search for efficiencies and higher profits.³ The result is a structural shift in power in the news production process to the advantage of public relations professionals; journalists are made more dependent on public relations professionals for their news. This is a more sophisticated version of the oft-heard colloquial condemnation of contemporary news production that current

² Sigal (1973) made similar observations in his study of the interaction between reporters and officials. He argued that as newsroom resources increased, the reliance on official sources declined and investigative journalism increased.

³ For a thorough examination of this process in the United States see Bagdikian (1992; 2004) and Miller (1998) for Canada.

journalism is reduced to rewriting press releases.⁴ Therefore, one important factor in examining the expansion of public relations resources is to examine this in light of parallel trends within the news media and to consider public relations professionals and journalists as existing in a relationship, with news as an outcome.

The second process constituting the public relations state is the politicization of public relations resources. While the debate about what constitutes politics and politicization are profound debates of power and first principles, this is not what observers of the public relations state have in mind when they discuss this phenomenon. Instead, observers are suggesting some form of a transformed relationship between the bureaucracy and the elected level of government and a blurring of the distinction between politics and administration. Although this distinction has been critiqued from many sides as being conservative or empirically untrue, it lingers today, particularly within the field of public administration. One American scholar of public administration put the distinction as follows:

But at the same time, it [the dichotomy] lingers, both as an idea and as a practice. And I don't judge the lingering as simple inertia, a cultural lag. The twofold schema has too much going for it in logic and usefulness simply to disappear. We *do*, commonsensically, decide and execute, set policy and administer (Waldo in Brown and Stillman 1986, 153).

In Canada, Savoie argues that the distinction never really went away and remained a bedrock assumption of how both politicians and civil servants saw their relationship.

⁴ When presented with this thesis, one journalist commented, "That's absolutely a problem (Interview 11)."

The essential feature of the Canadian system is the clear division between politicians and civil servants on the one hand and the close relationship between policy and administration on the other. Moreover, Canadian politicians continue, publicly at least to embrace the political-administrative dichotomy and hence the need for politicians and career officials to occupy distinct spaces (Savoie 2003, 11).

The challenge, then, is to develop reliable ways for scholars to map empirically the relationship between “politics” and “administration.” This is difficult, particularly within the field of public relations, which perhaps straddles the murky area between politics and administration more than any other activity of the bureaucracy. A recent essay by Kozolanka (2006) on the rise of “strategic communications” in the government of Canada reveals how the distinction between politics and administration retains its conceptual appeal, but can also be poorly applied. In defining the rise of “politicized” government communications, she relies on a tautological definition of what constitutes “politicization.” “Since the act of naming something as political is subjective, politicization is a constructed concept that reinvents what is perceived to be true or real for the purposes of influencing an issue politically (much as George W. Bush is seen to be politicizing science by playing with creationism)” (2006, 345). She clouds the picture further when she differentiates government and state communications. According to her, “government communications has become state communications by equating its work with the perspectives of the governing party” (2006, 344). She expands on the definition in a footnote.

In this paper, 'government' refers to the public service or bureaucracy, and 'state' or 'the government' refers to the larger apparatus, including the political arm of government. Government communications is undertaken by members of the public service employed in communications positions across government who report to their departmental managers, who themselves take direction and advice from the Privy Council Office. This paper argues that the distinction between government operations ('neutral' communications) and state operations (politicized communications), both undertaken by government communications employees, has become blurred (344 footnote).

While it is useful to define the state as an entity broader than the government, it is hard to accept that the "government" becomes the "state" when one includes the political level, as Kozolanka advises us to do.

Thankfully, other scholars within the field of public administration have provided more nuanced ways of mapping the politics and administration dichotomy. Peters and Pierre define the process of the politicization of the civil service as "...the substitution of political criteria for merit criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining of members of the public service" (2004, 3). Rouban suggests, however, that legal structures are insufficient to fully understand the relationship (2003, 319). Instead, he suggests observers carefully examine the extent to which civil servants are involved in political decision making, participate in the political process, and the extent to which civil servants' careers are influenced by the partisan level of government. While quantitative data may be helpful in examining some of those dimensions – for example survey data can help ascertain the voting behaviour of civil servants – qualitative historical assessments are invaluable for furthering comparative research.

[D]ue attention should be paid to the historical evolution of the relationship between public administration and politics in each country in order to make good and useful comparisons. Too often, data are outdated or lacking in Western democracies, giving room for misleading interpretations. Biographical studies and career stories are of a crucial interest in order to understand the dynamics of politicization (2003, 319).

Finally, Savoie introduces the concept of distinct spaces in his examination of the transformation of the civil service.

The notion of distinct spaces (roles, spheres, or areas of jurisdiction) permeates Canada's national political and administrative institutions and defines the relationship between politicians and career officials and how government departments operate. Parliament plays a distinct role, and occupies a different space from cabinet. In turn, cabinet has its own distinct role, and so we have individual ministers within their departments. The same is true again about government departments, which hold responsibility for a given sector, and so it goes down the line, with every career official occupying a specific office with specific policy or program responsibility and having a specific job description. This is expected to work on the basis of a traditional bargain that has never been written down (Savoie 2003, 10).

All these concepts above can be used to assess where government public relations lie in the relationship between politics and administration.

The third and final process constituting the rise of the public relations state is the centralization of those resources in the administrative apparatus. This is often seen as closely related to the politicization of government public relations. For example, in her essay examining the rise of strategic communications, Kozolanka writes: "Centralization [of government communications] was also a reaction to the more contested policy environment and was part of the attempt to regain control of the public service by making more strategic use of communications" (2006, 353). The same link between

centralization and politicization has been identified for the broader bureaucracy. It is no coincidence that the author who identified the broken bargain between politicians and the civil service (Savoie 2003) also examined the centralization of power within the Canadian bureaucracy (1999). In the latter book, Savoie addresses the tension at the heart of parliamentary government between the cabinet as a collective decision-making body composed of individual ministers who simultaneously head hierarchically organized departments. With the expansion of public services and the growth of the state in the 20th century, it became clear that problems could not be fit easily into any single department. Consequently, there has been a strong demand for a significant coordinating capacity at the centre of government to ensure efficiencies and to make sure that departments are not working at cross purposes.

In the same way that central agencies were originally conceived to coordinate the actions of disparate departments, so too the centralization of government communications often has more benign intentions. Centralizing the purchasing of private-sector services can prevent expensive duplication. Ensuring a degree of central co-ordination of disparate branches of government can prevent the dissemination of unclear or contradictory information.

However, while there are historically benign origins to central agencies, there are concerns today about whether this process has gone too far and whether central agencies are helping or hurting contemporary governance. In Savoie's eyes, several contemporary dynamics have increased the pressure to centralize the administration of the Canadian state to an inordinate and unacceptable degree (1999, 60). International

trade agreements, fiscal pressure and the complex nature of contemporary political problems all make increased central control necessary. However, central agencies have gone far beyond coordinating the work of individual departments. When an external act convinces actors within the government that something must be done and the prime minister maintains a significant commitment to a particular policy agenda, central agencies can help her achieve comprehensive policy changes. But these situations are not the norm, according to Savoie.

[A]t no other time is a concerted and comprehensive policy agenda possible. Having abandoned any hope of defining an overarching policy agenda, the centre of government now seeks simply to control the various forces, if only to keep a lid on things, to enable a handful of overriding priorities as defined by the Prime Minister to see the light of day and to protect the government's political interests in the media and before the country's political institutions (Savoie 1999, 339).

Elsewhere, Savoie calls this process governing by “bolts of electricity” (339). Aside from the one or two initiatives the prime minister and central agencies deem to be important, policy change can only happen when the prime minister deems one or two initiatives as core projects and commits the weight of the central agencies behind it. Otherwise, the Canadian bureaucracy waits, trying to prevent the next “bolt of electricity.” The centralization of public relations resources and the relationship with the media is part of the increased power of central agencies that Savoie decries.

The role of the media has also changed substantially. For the most part, it is no longer just a narrator or an independent observer reporting and commenting on political events. It has become an important political actor in its own right. Television and its tendency to turn a thirty-second clip on the evening news to sum up major policy issues or, much more often, to report on something gone awry in government have had a profound impact on government operations. The centre, broadly defined, has become extremely sensitive to potential media-inspired developments it cannot control and to surprises which can give rise to political problems and embarrassments (Savoie 1999, 339).

Most, if not all, examinations of government public relations take note of these three processes and the studies of the government of Alberta are no different. However, the studies to date are not only insufficiently comparative in a historical sense, but also in a spatial sense. One major consequence of this insufficient attention to comparative analysis is to confuse the general and the unique and to misunderstand important causal relationships. This dissertation seeks to remedy some of these problems by examining the historical evolution of government public relations in a within-case comparison of three Progressive Conservative administrations of Premiers Lougheed, Getty and Klein.

Chapter 1: Literature Review, Explanatory Model, Methodology

1.1 Normative and Empirical Theoretical Framework

This chapter does three things. First it examines four normative approaches to the study of government public relations, assessing each approach. Second, it presents an explanatory model of opportunities and incentives that is used in the dissertation to explain the evolution of government public relations in the province of Alberta from 1971-2006. Third, it evaluates and adapts this model for use in a within-case comparison.

The four normative approaches to the study of government public relations are: elite theory, participatory democratic theory, critical perspectives and public administration. The dissertation rejects the elite theory, participatory democratic approach and the critical approach but cautiously accepts an administrative imperative for the public relations campaigns, recognizing that governments can use these techniques for purposes beyond achieving widely accepted public policy goals.

First, regarding elite theory, the fears of uninformed citizens and the inflamed passions of mass populations have animated hostility to democratic rule from its inception. Early American democrats, such as Thomas Jefferson, always felt that public commitments to universal education and a free press were the only ways to mitigate against the consequences of uninformed citizens (Jefferson 1975, 415; Barber 1998, 161-175).

However, modern democratic theorists have had to face the uncomfortable fact that, despite widespread mass media and the introduction of universal public education in most countries, there remains a gap between the normative ideal of informed citizen participation and the empirical observation that many citizens know very little about public affairs (Milner 2002; Howe 2003). As a result, elite theorists, such as Walter Lippmann, felt that the early democratic faith in the news media and public education was insufficient to enable citizen self-rule. According to him, particular characteristics of mass society – artificial censorships, limited social contact between citizens, minimal time in the day available for public affairs and the difficulty with which simple language expresses complex situations – are all external limitations on the citizen’s capacity to have a clear understanding of the public world (Lippmann 1923). Moreover, Lippmann argued that the faith Jefferson placed in newspapers’ capacity to provide necessary public knowledge was ill founded. Instead, public opinion had to be organized – and the consent of the people manufactured – by the government.

The newspapers are regarded by democrats as a panacea for their own defects, whereas analysis of the nature of news and of the economic basis of journalism seems to show that the newspapers necessarily and inevitably reflect, and therefore, in greater or lesser measure, intensify, the defective organization of public opinion. *My conclusion is that public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound, not by the press as is the case today. This organization I conceive to be in the first instance the task of a political science that has won its proper place as formulator, in advance of real decision, instead of apologist, critic, or reporter after the decision has been made* (1922, 7, emphasis mine).

On this account government public relations practices such as advertising, news management and public opinion research are virtuous and necessary in order to

manufacture the consent of the governed; they are judged by the extent to which they make stable, elite rule possible and prevent the breakdown of complicated, mass societies.

One major objection to elite theories is that they fundamentally underestimate the capacity of citizens to govern themselves, to acquire information and, in particular, to learn about public affairs in the process of governing. As a consequence, participatory democratic theory is much more open to citizen engagement in the public process. Some participatory democrats advocate public relations practices, particularly public opinion surveys and focus groups, as efficient ways for citizens to be more directly involved into the policy-making process. One of the founders of the modern public opinion survey, George Gallup, described this particular tool as a way to bridge the gap between citizens and representatives (Gallup and Rae 1940, 14). Reflecting this notion, when Prime Minister Trudeau announced the formation of a full-service government information agency in 1970, one of its expressed objectives was to increase the capacity of citizens to participate in the decision-making structures of government. “Information Canada will be equally concerned with what citizens wish to say to their government. Whatever they say through opinion surveys will be public information, subject, of course, to the protection of personal privacy, all reports on public viewpoints will be made public” (Trudeau quoted in Miller 1976, Annex II). The Canadian constitutional scholar, Peter Russell, advocated that policy makers rely on public opinion polls as a counterweight to organized interest groups (1969, 121). Even Rose, who takes a critical view of government advertising, holds out hope for the participatory capacity of public opinion

surveys. "...[G]overnments have much more efficient and reliable means for obtaining citizen input, most notably public opinion polling, which, notwithstanding its many limitations provides a good feedback loop between the public and elite decision makers" (2001, 15).

Historically, however, such practices have not lived up to the standards envisioned by theorists committed to participatory democracy. One problem is that using public opinion research as a tool of participation clashes with the representative notion of government that grants elected politicians a mandate to pursue their own policies that are subject to judgment at the next election. Consequently, Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) point out how American politicians do not slavishly pander to public opinion polls, but use them to devise arguments and language that will win popular support for their preferred policies. As a result, public opinion research does not necessarily engender participatory democracy, but strengthens representative government. In this regard, the most thorough examination of how public opinion research is used in the Canadian government supports this contention: "As we have seen, the greatest impact of opinion research is on communications – mainly after a policy decision has been made" (Page 2006, 184).

Moreover, most of those who advocate the use of public opinion surveys and focus groups in the interests of democratic governance rely on the assumption that citizens have fixed preferences and that the task of policy-makers is only to discover what those preferences are and then implement them. Most participatory democrats reject the assumption of fixed preferences in favour of processes of citizen interaction, learning and deliberation (Offe and Preuss 1991). For example, Barber writes: "Voting without prior

debate, polling without full-scale presentation of positions and facts, expressions of preference without a sense of the public context of choice, all do more to undermine democracy than to reinforce it (1998, 243).” Instead of relying on public opinion surveys to discern citizens’ ostensibly fixed preferences, participatory democrats envision a role for much more robust institutions such as local citizens’ assemblies, lottery elections, public education, civic education courses and public interest media systems that encourage diverse programming.

The other objection to elite theories is that, where they see themselves as a form of benevolent elite leadership, governing in the interests of an entire nation that is incapable of discerning its own interests via citizen participation, they often resemble an elite leadership that governs not in the interests of the “whole” but in the interests of particular social classes. Elite democracy is often not an Aristotelian aristocracy where the few benevolently rule over the many, but an oligarchy, where the few rule for themselves.

This is the argument made by critical examinations of government public relations, by far the most numerous of the four approaches. The major purpose of these studies is to expose the exploitative form of elite rule and uncover and understand the mechanisms and processes by which structural relations of power are maintained and reproduced. For example, several studies emphasize the role that government public relations campaigns play in the neo-liberal restructuring of the 1990s. In this regard, Weaver and Motion (2002) examined the relationship between public relations and the neoliberal reforms in New Zealand. They argue that the private funding of academic research creates an environment wherein privately funded research institutes face pressures to sell, promote

and market their products, often relying on public relations firms to do so. Other studies have relied heavily on the Gramscian notion of ideological hegemony. For example, Kozolanka (2007) argued that the Harris government used public relations tactics to establish the necessary ideological hegemony over oppositional groups to institute wide-ranging neoliberal restructuring of the Ontario economy.

Perhaps the most famous study that critically examines government public relations is the propaganda model, developed by Herman and Chomsky (1988). In this model that seeks to explain the workings of media systems, five filters combine to ensure that putatively independent news media organizations act as if they were propaganda media organizations in totalitarian societies. Those five filters are: 1) the fact that news outlets are large, private, profit-seeking corporations that are linked to dominant capitalist enterprises; 2) these corporations' reliance on advertising as their prime source of income which further ingratiates them to the needs and interests of private capital; 3) the reliance on official sources for news; 4) the capacity of those official sources to discipline journalists and news outlets through legal action or the withdrawal of access to sources; 5) anti-communist ideology. The third and fourth filters – the reliance on official sources and disciplinary measures applied by elites vis-à-vis journalists – directly relate to and constitute government public relations strategies.

However, there are two challenges to the propaganda model. First, it treats government public relations efforts as a fixed fact of political life. According to Herman and Chomsky, governments distribute hundreds of news releases and provide official sources and journalists consequently write deferential stories. Instead, and this is one of the

contributions of this dissertation, there is a surprising amount of politics in how governments practice public relations, how they disseminate information and how they relate to the news media. The propaganda model obscures all these developments.⁵

Second, it reflects a skewed attention to the oppressive and authoritarian characteristics of the state. For example, in discussing the third filter, the reliance on official sources for news, Herman and Chomsky focus on the public relations practices of the United States Air Force. They compare its vast public relations resources (over one hundred newspapers, a magazine, radio and television stations, hundreds of thousands of news releases, meetings with editorial boards etc.) with the meager public relations infrastructure of the pacifist organizations American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCCC). The AFSC had a communications budget of \$500,000 and 11 staff people; the NCCC had a budget of \$300,000. They argue that the combined financial resources of the state (and allied corporations) dwarf those of entities that challenge their policies, ensuring that the news media hew to a deferential line. While there is no question that the state can play authoritarian and oppressive roles, it is an oversimplification of matters to reduce it to these. There is a reason Herman and Chomsky emphasize the public relations activities of the Air Force and are silent about similar activities of other, less malevolent agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency: focusing on the Air Force reflects their conception of the state as an authoritarian and oppressive entity.

⁵ Not all critical accounts are this simplistic. Kozolanka explicitly examines how the government of Ontario adopted particular tactics to implement its policies.

This second challenge to the propaganda model (and other critical approaches) means that it misses what one might call “administrative imperatives” for governments to engage in a wide variety of public relations campaigns. This perspective does not see government public relations as a tool to enable elite rule, but instead, sees these campaigns as a specific policy tool to help representative governments implement public policies efficiently and successfully.

This imperative stems from the limited capacity of regulation to change citizen behaviour. There are particular social problems that cannot be solved by regulation or the provision of incentives or punishments alone. Environmental challenges are such a field. Rational choice theory, with its emphasis on individuals as economic actors, suggests that to change citizens' behaviour to meet policy goals, one should offer citizens a large enough reward or make them pay a sufficiently high price such that they “choose” to behave differently. Thus, if one wants to limit greenhouse gases emitted from personal automobiles, one can increase taxes on gasoline such that citizens drive less, thereby emitting less. However, this approach to public policy has its limits. For example a public policy of high taxes on the price of gasoline ignores the social infrastructure previously built up that requires individuals to travel by car (suburban development and urban sprawl; low investment in public transit). What may occur, therefore, is not any alteration in behaviour, but rather a shift in household expenditures as people simply choose to pay more for travel at the expense of other items, leaving the original problem

unaddressed. A different policy tool is to persuade citizens to alter their behaviour.⁶ Stewart advocates this approach and uses the example of persuasion in the field of environmental policy.

Setting enforceable standards without also seeking to change minds only appears to solve the problem and, arguably, leads to a concentration on the activities of business when the attitudes, habits and expectations of ordinary citizens must also alter if environmental degradation is to be halted (Stewart 1993).

The anti-smoking campaigns many countries have adopted are parallel examples of this kind of policy initiative. High taxes on tobacco products may not be enough to dissuade citizens to cease smoking, given its addictive qualities. However, convincing users of the dangers of such an activity, by publicizing clear, graphic – even shocking – advertisements highlighting the negative consequences of smoking may do just that.

Of course, once one concedes room for the legitimacy of state-led persuasion campaigns, one opens the door to an entire bureaucracy of officials who plan and execute advertising campaigns, news management techniques and public opinion research to ensure these campaigns' effectiveness and outcomes. However, this will invariably bring with it temptations by politicians to use these techniques to their own political advantage and accusations by the opposition that this is happening.

For this reason, not all find the administrative imperatives for public relations campaigns convincing. For example, Rose argues that government advertising, in general, presupposes a lack of information by citizens about government programs and

⁶ Mitnick (1980) argues that information and persuasion campaigns can complement prohibitionist measures by making citizens aware of previously unknown incentives.

usurps the educational and informational role that the mass media should more legitimately play (2001, 37). This hesitancy is not well placed. For example, the presupposition that citizens know very little about basic government programs is hardly implausible. Moreover, the act of the state persuading citizens is not, in and of itself, particularly objectionable; it depends on the end of the persuasion. Rose's preference to have the mass media educate citizens about basic government policies is also problematic for the mass media bring with them their own filters when reporting about politics and public affairs. Large, commercial mass media, dependent on private advertising revenue, may have limited incentives in informing citizens about the dangers of workplace safety, but a government agency responsible for workplace injury insurance may have a very strong interest in promoting just that. Market pressures may also create regional biases. If the mass media are concentrated in large, urban markets, citizens in outlying regions may not be well served in obtaining information about programs relevant to them. Moreover, because the mass media fulfill a wide range of tasks, including holding elected officials to account, informing the public about basic government policies may not be high on their list of priorities.⁷

Ultimately, Rose rejects the administrative imperative for government advertising and he is entirely right to caution us about being excessively naïve about the potential misuses. He is also right that some of the dominant ways of assessing the legitimacy of

⁷ Patterson (1997) has identified a substantial rise in 'soft' news in the mass media, suggesting that the mass media are weakening their commitment to inform citizens about public policies.

government communications are not sufficient.⁸ At the same time, it is not hard to imagine important administrative functions that advertising and other public relations practices can fill. In a report, the Auditor General of British Columbia, in reference to government programs and partisan political communications, noted the obligation to communicate with citizens as follows:

In meeting their responsibility to keep the public informed about government program and policy initiatives, ministries regularly need to notify the public about a range of matters, such as: their existing rights or responsibilities under various government programs; the introduction of new programs or policies, or recent and coming changes to existing programs; the introduction of new programs or policies, or recent and coming changes to existing programs; the launching of public awareness campaigns aimed at modifying behaviour (1996, 39).

In conclusion, we are left with the observation that elite theorists see government public relations as virtuous and necessary and that they should be judged by how well they enable stable government in complex mass societies, without descending into outright totalitarian regimes. Yet those theorists often confuse exploitative rule for benevolent elite rule. While some practitioners and scholars inspired by norms of participatory democracy see some hope for public relations tools such as public opinion surveys, empirical observation suggests that governments tend to use these tools more

⁸ Rose identifies a common distinction between “information” government advertising (which correlates to administration) and “persuasive” government advertising (which correlates to politics) (194-197). Boyer makes a similar distinction between “informational” advertising and “promotional” advertising (1982, 34). He saw the former as legitimate and the latter as illegitimate, a waste of public funds and symptomatic of a deeper malaise in government. Rose correctly argues that this distinction between information and persuasion or information and promotion cannot be a sufficient ground for assessing the legitimacy of government advertising. Government advertising that informs often persuades and government advertising that persuades is not always illegitimate.

often only to implement policies they have already settled on. Moreover, other participatory democrats question the assumption of fixed preferences, on which public opinion surveys often rest. In sum, there are good grounds to be skeptical of the democratic credentials of government public relations practices. Critical approaches, exemplified by the propaganda model, obscure both the political contingency of government public relations and rest on a questionable theory of the state as overwhelmingly oppressive and authoritarian.

By contrast, the administrative imperative for such practices appears to be on firmer ground, but the challenge in this perspective is to avoid naïveté and to be attentive to the role that public relations campaigns play in the broader political economy as well as how public relations campaigns go beyond simple administrative goals to take on a more important role in the political process. As such, this dissertation adopts a normative standpoint vis-à-vis government public relations that might best be characterized as accepting the administrative imperative with caution and skepticism.

With this normative commitment, there remains substantial empirical work to be done. For example, the introduction pointed out that existing studies of government public relations in Alberta all lacked historical context. Moreover, despite all that has recently been written about the rise of spin doctors, government advertising and manipulative news management techniques in other jurisdictions, we still do not know, what forces in particular, might contribute to governments deciding to public relations strategies central to the political process. Consequently, this thesis asks three specific questions: how did government public relations evolve over the course of three Progressive Conservative

administrations, paying particular attention to the three processes of expansion, politicization and centralization of public relations resources? Second, what explains that evolution? Third, what are the consequences of those developments?

To explain the evolution of government public relations in Alberta, this dissertation adopts a model developed by Kriesi (2004), which describes conditions that create incentives for politicians to “go public” to mobilize public opinion strategically. By the strategic mobilization of public opinion, Kriesi means all the activities associated with the public relations state: public opinion research to test audience reaction to issues, advertisements and the use of public relations experts to place the policy in the public sphere via advertising or news management strategies. He describes the process of using public relations strategies as follows:

Under current conditions, the strategy of going public can be used in a more focused way and as early as the early stages of the decision-making process. The point of departure for such a strategy is the systematic observation of public opinion through surveys and focus groups. The answers that the political actors receive for their policy-specific questions allow them to formulate a political offer that can count on the citizens’ support. For such a strategy to be successful, it is important that the answers are not made public, but are exclusively used by the actors concerned with elaborating their political offer. Only once the offer is carefully engineered based on the indication of citizens’ demands, the political actors communicate it to the media that then report on it to the public. The presentation of the political offer in the media, in turn, is professionally prepared by “spin doctors” or public relations specialists who place it in the right media at the right time (Esser 2000, 22). Based on the public’s reaction, which is commented on and interpreted by the media, political actors expect to reinforce their position in the political process (192).

There are four reasons to introduce this model. First, the outcome that the model seeks to predict – when politicians will adopt public relations strategies strategically to mobilize public opinion – is precisely what is of concern in this dissertation. Second, the model is developed and narrow enough to make specific, testable claims about the role that government public relations play in the contemporary political process. Third, as a model of political opportunities and incentives, it incorporates both political institutions and issues, allowing the analysis to incorporate changes in the broader political economy and agenda. Fourth, because it is contained in a published collection of essays meant to inspire a program of comparative research into practices of political communication (Esser and Pfetsch 2004), using and testing the model enables this thesis to make a specific contribution to an existing research program.

The model's roots lie in the political opportunity structure school of social movement mobilization, with which Kriesi has long been associated (1995*a* and 1995*b*). The core insight of this theory of social movement mobilization is that political actors who seek to make change can only do so in a political and institutional environment that is, to a large extent, beyond their control. According to this approach, the political opportunity structure faced by social movements is the most important variable (as opposed to motivations or resources) that determines the pattern of mobilization. Kriesi describes the approach as follows:

Recent work on political mobilization has emphasized that levels and forms of mobilization by social movements, interest groups, and citizens' action groups are strongly influenced by so-called *political opportunity structures* – the set of opportunities and constraints given by the institutional structure and political culture of the political system in which mobilization takes place. We can assume that these findings not only apply to political mobilization, but also to political communication and to public strategies more generally. This assumption is substantiated by more recent efforts to introduce the concept of discursive opportunities (Koopmans and Statham 1999) (Kriesi 2004, 201, emphasis in original).⁹

In one essay that defended the political opportunity structure approach from a cultural critique, opportunities are defined as, “options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them that depend on factors outside the mobilizing group. The opportunity thesis then amounts to the claim that people choose those options for collective action that are (1) available and (2) expected to result in a favorable outcome” (Koopmans 1999, 98). Consequently, the political opportunity structure approach does assume the rationality of actors, but it notes that this rationality is bounded by the external political institutions and configurations of power (Simon 1982).¹⁰

It bears emphasizing that this approach does *not* state that favourable opportunity structures are sufficient to explain collective mobilization. In the case of social movement mobilization, “opportunities *alone* can never explain collective action, which at least also requires motivations, capacities to act, and a sense of collective identity” (Koopmans 1999, 99). As a result, explanations rooted in political opportunity structures

⁹ Koopmans and Statham (1999) linked social movement discourses in leaflets, pamphlets and programs to political opportunity structures.

¹⁰ Although much of the literature that makes use of bounded rationality argues that organizations or actors are bound by internal processes and organizational culture, the political opportunity structure approach conceives of actors acting rationally in the context of external limitations.

are strengthened when one can make reasonable claims about the motivations and goals of political actors under investigation and, perhaps more importantly, bring to light evidence that demonstrates that actors linked the political opportunity structure in which they operated with their desired goals. Information that is available to historical examination, but may not have been available to political actors at the time must be treated with caution in generating an explanation or discounted outright.

In this case, the outcome of interest is why governments adopt public relations strategies to manipulate public opinion. Kriesi did the bulk of the work adapting what was originally developed as a theory of social movement mobilization to the question of the strategic mobilization and manipulation of public opinion in his essay (2004) in a collection of contributions developing a program of comparative political communication research. The essential reason why this model works to explain why governments do or do not adopt public relations strategies is because politics does not always have to be conducted in the public sphere. Governments, political parties and challengers can pursue their goals in any number of arenas: by regulation, by protest, judicial challenges, brokering compromises among established interests, or forming political parties. Similarly, winning public relations battles in the media is only one way of accomplishing political goals and these conflicts occur in certain institutional and political configurations. The model developed by Kriesi is meant to improve our knowledge of what institutional and political configurations lend themselves to politicians choosing to pursue public relations campaigns to accomplish their goals and why.

The following section introduces the technique of process tracing which can be used to link changes in the political opportunity structure to decisions by political actors to adopt public relations strategies.

1.2 Methodology and Sources of Data

This dissertation will rely on the use of process tracing to examine how changes in the political opportunity structure contributed to political actors calculating that their goals could best be met by adopting public relations campaigns that go beyond simple administration of public policy to winning political and legislative battles. In the words of two scholars of international relations who are strong advocates of this style of mixed-methods research, “Process-tracing seeks to uncover a causal chain coupling independent variables with dependent variables and evidence of the causal mechanisms posited by a theory” (George and Bennett 2005, 153). Process tracing and within-case comparisons put forward by George and Bennett differ from the approach to mixed-method and case study research put forward by King, Keohane and Verba (1994) which advocates increasing the number of observations to increase the statistical significance of a correlation. George and Bennett write: “It is not sufficient that a hypothesis be consistent with a statistically significant number of intervening steps” (2005, 207). Instead,

in using theories to develop explanations of cases through process tracing, all the intervening steps in a case must be as predicted by a hypothesis, or else that hypothesis must be amended – perhaps trivially or perhaps fundamentally – to explain the case. It is not sufficient that a hypothesis be consistent with statistically significant number of intervening steps (George and Bennett 2005, 207).

Collier describes the method of process tracing as involving “ a series of within-case observations, against which the hypothesis can be tested” (1993, 116). The major objective of process tracing is to generate evidence that plausibly demonstrates a causal relationship that is hypothesized to exist between two variables.

While this method may sacrifice generalizations about relationships between independent and dependent variables, it has the virtue of carefully documenting causal processes hypothesized by existing theories of the subject matter under question. In the case of using a model inspired by political opportunity structure, process tracing has to show that a) political actors were *aware* of characteristics of the political opportunity structure b) made decisions to pursue a particular strategy *because* of those changes. When changes in the political opportunity structure change vary with changes in strategies, it may raise suspicions that the two are related, but there must be evidence showing that the actors involved were aware of the changes and those changes were linked to actors’ decisions.

Kriesi’s model of opportunities suggests that the configuration of political institutions interacts with the particular issue-specific conflict configurations of the political agenda to create situations – or political opportunities – where actors have strong incentives to intervene strategically to mobilize public opinion via public relations. The model posits that there are four relevant dimensions of the institutional context: the type of democracy (majoritarian or consensus-based); the accessibility of the state (federalism, bicameralism, direct democracy, etc.); the party system; and the media system. Each

dimension will be discussed in turn and specific hypotheses will be presented about how each relates to government public relations campaigns.

Prior to this, however, it is necessary to point out two initial adaptations that are required successfully to use it to explain the case at hand. First, because Kriesi's model is meant to apply to study the public relations strategies of both social movements (challengers) and governments, while this case is only interested in the strategies of governments, one dimension of state institutions, the accessibility of the state (bicameralism, federalism, accessible bureaucracies etc.) is removed for the purposes of this study.¹¹ Second, although the model is meant to structure cross-national comparisons, a within-case, historical comparison of the evolving relationship between government public relations and political opportunities, such as the one proposed here, can be useful. Because of that adaptation, it is necessary to pay close attention to the role of sequence, political history and previous decisions in the shaping of events. The evolution of government public relations over time will not just be shaped by the opportunities and incentives each government faces, but also by what actors in each government learned from the previous one.

The distinction between majoritarian and consensus political systems corresponds to Lijphart's distinction (1999) between executive-based political systems that tend to concentrate power in the executive and the government, and party systems, which tend to distribute power from the executive to the parliament and political parties. In general, Kriesi suggests that majoritarian democracies create conditions favourable to the strategic

¹¹ Kriesi emphasizes this dimension is more important for challengers than for governments.

mobilization of public opinion in the public sphere because of the concentration of power in a single head of the executive government. This lends itself to a personalization of political issues, often played out in the public sphere. Also, lines of accountability are clearer in majoritarian systems: heads of government have less of an opportunity to divide responsibility for decisions among parties and other levels of government.

We can assume that the public sphere in general and top-down strategies of going public in particular will be more important in majoritarian democracies than in consensus democracies. The concentration of power in the hands of a few individual actors at the top of the respective institutions creates the necessary preconditions (prominence and prestige of individual personalities). It is hardly an accident that the public sphere plays a particularly important role and that the strategies of going public are particularly well developed in the United States, which, according to this classification, is a majoritarian democracy. By contrast such strategies remain the exception in Switzerland, the paradigmatic case of a consensus democracy. In the Swiss case, the direct-democratic institutions impose additional constraints on such strategies. The direct democratic procedures are issue specific, which presents a far-reaching personalization. Moreover, they allow for a quasi-institutionalized going public, which limits the incentives to use such strategies outside of direct-democratic campaigns. In a country such as Switzerland, members of government who go public over the heads of their colleagues are violating the rules of the game and will most likely obtain counterproductive-results (Kriesi 2004, 203).

Schmidt identifies a similar pattern in a comparative examination of the discourse of welfare state reform in majoritarian versus consensus-based systems. She noted that politicians in the former needed to adopt what she called a communicative discourse aimed at the population as a whole to implement substantial welfare state reform, while politicians in the latter adopted a coordinating discourse among elites, designed to

facilitate communication between coalition partners and political elites with vetoes in decision-making processes.

Here, [in majoritarian, single-actor systems] the debate and deliberation over major policy initiatives tend to go on in the wider public sphere (if at all), as policies formulated unilaterally by a small elite face public scrutiny and where the discursive process is therefore often adversarial, as the public, if not convinced of the necessity and appropriateness of the policies, can impose sanctions through periodic elections and protest (2002, 172).

This need to shape discourse among the population as a whole necessitates the careful use of public relations practices.

Thus, this dimension generates the hypothesis that heads of government in majoritarian systems, by virtue of their place at the head of a unified government, must manage public perceptions of accountability more carefully than in consensus-based democracies and that this contributes to a personalized style of politics, which, in turn, contributes to a great deal of politics practiced in the media sphere. Managing this perception of accountability and personalized politics requires a greater attention to public relations strategies.

In terms of the party system, Kriesi suggests that the weaker the parties within a party system, the greater the need to turn to the public sphere to mobilize public support. “It is likely that in countries where parties are no longer able to control their base, public strategies will become more important” (204). Similarly, Cook, in his examination of the news media’s role as a governing institution writes: “Indeed, one might go so far as to say that in the absence of linking institutions such as strong political parties or mass

movements, the American news media have been delegated the job of organizing the public sphere” (Cook 83). Thus, as voters become more independent, and less connected with party organizations, politicians have to resort more often to the public sphere in the form of sophisticated public relations campaigns to maintain popular support, implement policies and get reelected. This generates a second hypothesis within Kriesi’s model: as turnout declines, heads of governments become less sure of a reliable electoral base, requiring them to adopt public relations strategies to maintain public support.

One other dimension that should be considered is the degree of partisan competition in a political system. When politicians are under threat of electoral defeat, they have the option of shaping public opinion to conform to their own policy visions, allowing them to both implement their policy goals and secure re-election.¹² By contrast, where there is limited partisan competition, politicians are more to discount public opinion and pursue both their electoral and policy objectives. This generates a third hypothesis: as electoral competition increases, politicians are no longer free to discount public opinion to pursue their policy objectives, requiring public relations strategies to shape public opinion to conform to their policy objectives.

Finally, the model suggests that the nature of the media system will play a role in influencing decisions on whether or not to resort to public relations strategies. Kriesi argues that in countries with a strong, independent newspaper sector, relative to television, there will be a limited tendency for decision-makers to go public with the

¹² Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) use this logic to explain the rise of “crafted talk” in the United States, carefully measured and researched forms of political discourse, designed to shape public opinion to conform with the politicians’ wishes.

strategic mobilization of public opinion. As an example, he offers the case of Italy, where former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi launched a very media-focused political party. In part, this succeeded because of the predominance of television over the press in Italy. Unfortunately, this dimension is poorly conceptualized because there is a strong correlation between countries with a strong, independent press and those countries with a consensus-based democracy (204). Thus, Kriesi is apparently satisfied to have the party system serve as a proxy variable for the media system. Nevertheless, it is intrinsically plausible that the nature of the media system will play an important role in influencing actors' decisions to adopt public relations strategies.

Building on the limited proposals put forward by Kriesi, this dissertation starts with two hypothesized relationships between the media system and government public relations practices. First, in situations where television is more dominant than newspapers, politicians will have a stronger incentive to rely on public relations strategies to go public. This relationship arises for three reasons. First, the television medium creates a more direct relationship between politician and audience and creates a greater need, and opportunity, for a "managed" image. Consider a famous anecdote from the 1984 presidential campaign. A television journalist with CBS News prepared a long story for the national evening news highlighting discrepancies between what President Reagan's administration had done and what candidate Reagan was saying, but the story was accompanied by upbeat and positive images where the candidate was often surrounded by favourable colours of red, white and blue. After the critical story had aired, one of Reagan's aides thanked the journalist for the documentary. The aide

informed the journalist that the campaign was of the opinion that the audience would barely pay attention to the verbal criticisms contained within the television piece, but only recall the associations of the candidate with the patriotic red, white and blue imagery (Stahl 1999, 210). This kind of news management is harder with newspapers, primarily because the medium is written, not visual and, therefore, journalists and editors have greater control over the content.

Second, television has forced politicians to communicate ideas in much more concise ways, or “soundbites.” Hallin’s study of television news in the United States demonstrated that the average soundbite in 1968 was 43.1 seconds; by 1988 this had dropped to 8.9 seconds (1994, 134). While some politicians may have an innate capacity to express complex thoughts in simple sentences, it is more likely that most politicians have to learn this skill, this creates a demand within governments for a closer relationship between politicians and public relations staff.

Third, as television becomes more influential and widespread, competition in the news media increases, creating greater pressure to publish critical stories, requiring governments to pursue public relations strategies to manage this critical and confrontational relationship. According to Sabato’s classic examination of the “feeding frenzy” phenomenon of contemporary journalism, competition in media industries contributes to excessively aggressive journalism by reinforcing in journalists minds that if they fail to publish something newsworthy, no matter how questionable, salacious, insignificant or poorly-sourced, another media outlet will (Sabato 1991, 55-57).

Taken together, these three dynamics generate a fourth hypothesis: as television becomes more influential, there is a greater pressure for politicians to communicate in soundbites, the news media become more critical because of competition and there is a larger emphasis on the visual components of news, all creating pressures for politicians to adopt public relations strategies.

Second, the model suggests that governments have a greater incentive to adopt public relations strategies when the news media adopt an explicitly independent and non-partisan stance, vis-à-vis the governments, as opposed to a more deferential or explicitly partisan relationship. The reasoning behind this relationship is simple. As the news media are more deferential or partisan, politicians can rely on them to disseminate favourable information, rather than being confrontational. Thus, a fifth hypothesis is that as the independence and non-partisanship of the news media increase, politicians lose personal relationships with owners, managers and journalists, creating an increased willingness by the news media to report critical stories, requiring politicians to adopt public relations strategies to manage this newly independent news media.

While Kriesi dedicated some attention to hypothesizing about how different institutional configurations might shape political opportunities, he made no attempt to clarify the role of issue-specific conflict configurations in his model. One starting hypothesis is that in political conflicts where politicians seek to impose losses on an electorally important domestic constituency, there is a greater incentive to intervene strategically to shape public opinion. This hypothesis is derived from recent work in the politics of welfare state retrenchment. Pierson writes: “there is a profound difference

between extending benefits to large numbers of people and taking benefits away” (Pierson 1996). This is the case because constructing welfare state regimes also creates new political actors; namely, those who derive benefits from those welfare state programs including benefits recipients and public sector workers. Retrenching welfare state programs generates resistance from the concentrated interests of those who profit from them. Consequently, observers of the retrenchment of welfare states have generally noted that it is marked by the politics of blame avoidance or by the resilience of the welfare state, even in the face of politicians who bring an ideological opposition to public programs (Pierson 1996; Weaver 1986, 371-398). However, several studies have pointed out how the management of discourse is an essential way politicians can get around the path dependence of previous decisions. Cox (2001) argued that welfare reform succeeded in Denmark and the Netherlands but not in Germany because in the former two countries, politicians established an imperative for reform within the public discourse. “[R]eform was made possible in Denmark and the Netherlands by political leaders who mobilized public debate by a process called “path shaping”—framing issues in ways that generated widespread support for reform initiatives” (Cox 2001, 464). Similarly, Schmidt (2002) examined paired comparisons of institutionally similar countries and their respective experiences with welfare state retrenchment. She argued that one variable which accounted for the difference in successful and failed attempts at welfare state retrenchments is the establishment of a legitimating discourse. Thus, the hypothesis that majoritarian governments have strong incentives to intervene with public relations strategies to shape public opinion when they are pursuing retrenchment policies

is mature and worth examining in this case. These dynamics between retrenchment and political discourse generate a sixth hypothesis: politicians seeking to impose losses and pursue a retrenchment of the welfare state face electoral sanction at the hands of electorally important constituencies and turn to public relations strategies to insulate themselves.

A second hypothesis concerns the role of political culture. Laitin points out that shared symbols enable collective action, by facilitating political mobilization by political entrepreneurs. This, he argues, is the instrumental face of political culture.

Once a cultural group organizes politically, the common symbolic system makes for efficient collective action. Tamils in Sri Lanka, French speakers in Quebec, and Jews in the Soviet Union can be easily maintained as groups not because culture is more real than class but because organizational costs are relatively low when common and powerful symbols are readily available and rules of exclusion are easily formulated. Political entrepreneurs exploit this organizational advantage to make collective claims for resources. ... A good theory of culture must also point to the fact that people are instrumental about which aspect of their cultural repertoire is of primary significance and that shared symbols constitute a political resource that can be effectively exploited by political entrepreneurs (Laitin and Wildavsky 1988, 591).

Although Laitin has ethnocultural groups in mind, there is sufficient work on the different political cultures of Canadian provinces that it is worth considering whether government public relations evolved as the political issues in a particular province resonated or did not resonate with deeply held sentiments within that province's political culture (Elkins and Simeon 1980).

This generates a seventh and final hypothesis; namely, that when a political agenda is composed of issues that governments can plausibly link to traditions of political culture, aggressive public relations strategies are unnecessary because citizens are more likely to see their interests align with the government of the day. By contrast, when politicians do have issues that are more easily linked to traditions of political culture, politicians can more easily win public support. By “plausibly linking” contemporary issues to traditions of political culture, this dissertation simply recognizes that politicians must, on occasion, deal with issues not of their own choosing. Some of these issues are strongly related to traditions of political culture, others less so. For example, one long tradition of Alberta political culture is the longstanding and widespread belief that the provincial government’s first task is to defend the province against predatory external threats such as the federal government, central Canadian financial institutions and railways (Dacks 1985). This belief contributed to the early rejection of the Canadian party system in favour of radical experiments in non-partisan democracy such as the United Farmers of Alberta. However, in a political environment where there are no pressing, plausible external threats, governments lose the capacity to capitalize on this tendency within Alberta political culture.

Table 1 lists the conditions contained within the model of political opportunities and incentives to mobilize public opinion strategically, the hypothesized relationship with the outcome of interest and the causal mechanisms that might link them.

Table 1: Why Governments Adopt Public Relations Strategies

Condition	Measure	Hypothesized Relationship To Strategic Interventions Via Public Relations
Institutional Configuration		
Type of Democracy	Majoritarian or Consensus-Based	In majoritarian systems, heads of government must accept blame and take credit by virtue of their place at the head of a unified government, requiring public relations strategies to manage these public perceptions.
Party System	Party Strength (Turnout)	As turnout declines, governments become less secure about having a reliable electoral base which will support them, requiring public relations strategies to maintain electoral support.
	Level of Competition	As electoral defeat becomes increasingly possible, politicians can no longer discount public opinion to pursue their policy objectives and require public relations strategies to accomplish policy goals and secure reelection.
Media System	Independence of Press	As the independence of the press increases, politicians lose personal relationships and contacts with owners, managers and journalists, contributing to a greater willingness to publish critical news, requiring governments to adopt more sophisticated public relations strategies to manage the news.
	Predominance of Television	An influential television media sector contributes to greater competition in the news media, shortens soundbites, and elevates the importance of visual components of news, all requiring politicians to make use of professional public relations.
Issue-specific conflict configurations	Loss imposition or prosperity	When governments seek to impose losses on electorally important constituencies, they risk electoral sanction or defeat and rely on public relations strategies to insulate themselves.
	Do issues draw on traditions of political culture?	When politicians face agendas composed of issues that can be plausibly linked to traditions within political culture, aggressive public relations strategies are unnecessary because citizens are more likely to see their interests align with the government's.

Data for answering these questions and testing these hypotheses come from a mixture of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the private papers of Premier Don Getty and Premier Lougheed and documents from Alberta's Executive Council Office stored in the provincial archives and obtained through provisions in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.¹³ Many of these documents are confidential reports prepared for each premier or by and for senior officials in the respective ministries and have not been brought to light to date. Other primary sources include publicly available government documents including annual reports and departmental business plans.

Additionally, this dissertation incorporates insights from a series of elite-level interviews. Interview subjects were selected by a combination of non-random purposive and snowball sampling. Using publicly available telephone directories for the government of Alberta, a systematic effort was made to contact political and public relations officials and journalists in the following organizations during each premier's government: the Office of the Premier, the Public Affairs Bureau, the Alberta Executive

¹³ Premier Klein's private papers are, as of this writing, not available because he only recently completed his term. The major consequence of this fact is that the account of government public relations under Premier Klein relies much more on interview-based evidence and evidence in the public domain.

Council and the Legislature Press Gallery. In all 25, elite-level interviews were conducted.¹⁴

Secondary sources included the biographies of Premiers Lougheed and Klein (Dabbs 1995; Wood 1985; Martin 2002; Hustak 1979), as well as other book length analyses of particular aspects of the period.¹⁵ For example, two edited academic collections on Alberta politics are particularly useful. Caldarolo (1979) examines the Lougheed era, while Tupper and Gibbins' collection (1992) examines the Getty and Lougheed eras. Fraser (2003) is a historical examination of the cultural policies and economic prosperity of the Lougheed era. Nikiforuk and Pratt (1987) is a journalistic account of the transition from Premier Lougheed to Premier Getty's government. Lisac (1995) and Harrison and Laxer (1995) are critical accounts of Premier Klein's first term.

Finally, a particularly valuable source of information about both the Getty and Klein governments is the periodical newsletter *Insight Into Government* (1989-2006) produced by a member of the legislature press gallery. The newsletter is published weekly and is meant for lobbyists, political parties and interest groups. Each issue contains factual updates of legislative proceedings and political analysis.

¹⁴ In accordance with the necessary application approved by the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board for this thesis, interview subjects were given the opportunity to choose to be identified by name or remain anonymous. In the case that they chose to remain anonymous, they agreed they would be identified only with a general descriptor such as, "A journalist from the Getty era..." or a "departmental public relations official under Premiers Getty and Klein." All interviews were assigned a number for the purposes of citation. The descriptor, number and date of each interview are listed in the bibliography.

¹⁵ There is no published biography of Premier Getty.

1.3 Summary

There has been widespread interest in the practice of government public relations in the province of Alberta, however, this literature suffers from an insufficiently comparative perspective, both spatial and historical. After a brief examination of concerns from other jurisdictions about new trends in government public relations, this dissertation argues that three trends mark what Deacon and Golding call the rise of the “public relations state:” an expansion of resources dedicated by governments to professional public relations; the centralization of the communications function within the heart of government; and the politicization of government communications staff and functions. This dissertation seeks to remedy the insufficiently comparative nature of the study of government public relations in Alberta by conducting a within-case comparison of the subject.

Theoretically, the dissertation balances between the critical and administrative approaches to the study of government public relations. By conducting a within-case comparison of how and why government public relations evolved over three successive administrations we can learn about the way government public relations evolved in relation to the party system, the media system and the political agenda. Each chapter will be composed of two parts. First, it will examine the nature of the issue specific conflict configurations under each premier, the nature of the party system and partisan competition and the nature of the media system. Second, each chapter will describe the public relations structures and activities of the government and link these to the political opportunities of the day.

Chapter 2: Province Building And Restrained Advertising — Government Public Relations Under Peter Lougheed

When Premier Don Getty took over from Premier Lougheed, the managing director of the Public Affairs Bureau, Frank Calder,¹⁶ wrote the new premier a long memo on a number of issues dealing with the entire range of public relations functions. Written by one of Premier Lougheed's closest political associates and one of his government's senior public relations officials, this report provides the most reliable documentary evidence of the philosophy of government communications within the Lougheed government.

A major criticism of Public Affairs is that it has not done enough to sell the government to Albertans. This is a long-standing criticism. For many ministers, the Bureau has stood in the way of more political promotion, and more explicit selling of government programs ... Over the years, significant players at the political level have agreed with the premise that communications should be restrained and highly selective in selling the government (Calder 1986, 63).

While acknowledging that this view was probably held by a majority within the government and shared by most ministers and MLAs, Calder advanced the case that a different, minority case, was more prudent. He pleaded for continued restraint in forms of government communication and gave five reasons why this was advisable. First, that there were practical and economic limitations as to how many government programmes could be feasibly promoted; second, that there existed limitations as to how much the

¹⁶ Calder joined the Progressive Conservatives in the 1960s when Peter Lougheed became leader and joined Lougheed's staff in the Official Opposition (Wood 1985, 67). After the election, he joined the Office of the Premier and then joined the Public Affairs Bureau in charge of advertising practices. He became Managing Director from 1979 to 1986.

public actually cares about government programs; third, that it is often more important to have systems in place to allow the quick access to information when citizens want something specific rather than a constant barrage of advertising; fourth, that given increased fiscal restraints, promotional dollars would be limited; and finally, he noted a truism of advertising and political marketing that the most effective form of “selling” does not look like “selling” at all. “It is always better to be seen to be doing something or taking a strong stand, rather than having to talk about what you are doing” (Calder 1986).

He cited the respective advertising tactics of the federal and Alberta governments in the conflict over the National Energy Program, when the federal government engaged in intensive advocacy advertising. After what Calder called “a tremendous internal debate” (1986, 67), it was decided not to launch a parallel campaign; the Alberta government chose to refrain from an advertising program.

My argument at the time was that we were actually quite effective in changing public opinion in every part of the country except the City of Toronto. This had been accomplished in a lot of ways but primarily because other people carried our message for us, which will work so much better if you can pull it off. Albertans themselves mailed hundreds of thousands of our energy brochures to other parts of Canada. The national media made a major shift to Alberta’s view, with two main exceptions (Calder 1986, 67).

The model of incentives introduced in the previous chapter suggests that in a majoritarian system, governments have strong incentives to mobilize public opinion because political discourse is aimed at the citizenry as a whole and lines of accountability lead clearly back to the head of government. While Lougheed expanded the public relations activities of the government of Alberta and centralized those activities in a

central agency, there was a surprising commitment to restrained advertising and a distinct space for civil service communications, minimizing the political character of government public relations. Instead, these reforms were intended to improve administration and reflected modernizing trends in Alberta society and Lougheed's government. The only significant interventions into the public sphere were periodic television appearances by the premier, either in the form of interviews with journalists or, more seldom, televised addresses.

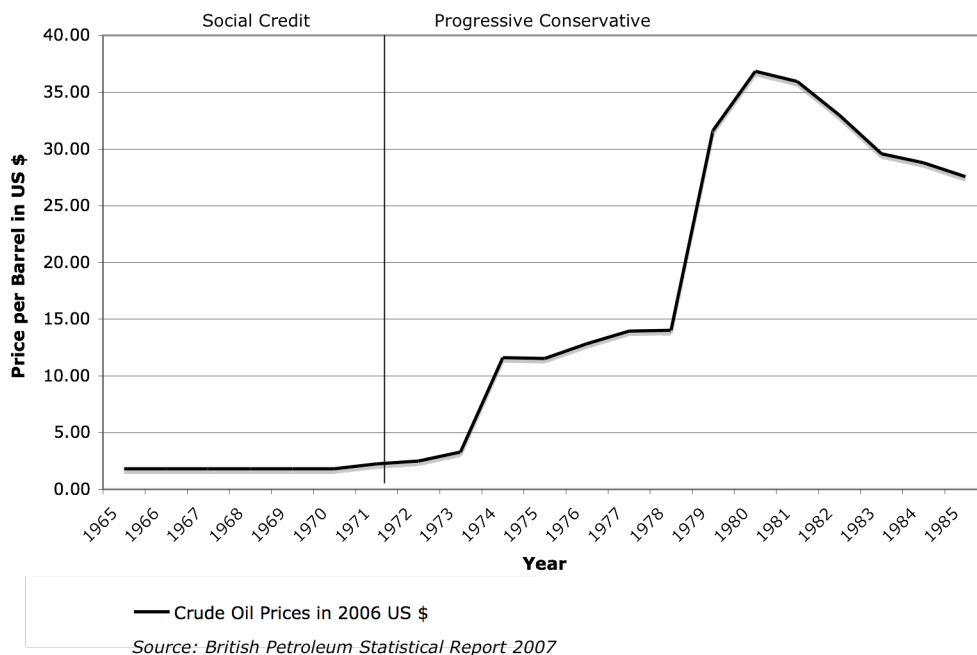
In the case of the Lougheed government, institutional and political factors existed that made these kinds of interventions generally – though not exclusively – unnecessary. In particular, his government faced limited partisan competition, had close relationships with deferential news media and dealt with a political agenda that allowed the government to expand public services dramatically and capitalize on deep currents in Alberta political culture. In this environment, a model of government communications that was premised on achieving administrative efficiency and that was “restrained and highly selective in selling the government” – to use Calder's words – posed no obstacle to reelection and accomplishing policy goals.

2.1 Political Issues

Lougheed was fortunate that global crude oil prices more than doubled just two years after he was elected. This increase was nothing short of transformative for Alberta; one broadcaster and former head of Alberta's Human Rights Commission later described the decade as Alberta's “Camelot Years (Fraser 2003).” Others compared the boom years

and the new cosmopolitanism, self-confidence, prosperity and urbanization with Quebec's Quiet Revolution (Marsh 2006). In terms of raw political strategy, the increased revenues allowed Lougheed the liberty of dramatically increasing public services, keeping taxes low and using the state to pursue a policy of economic diversification.

Figure 2-1: Crude Oil Prices, 1965-1985



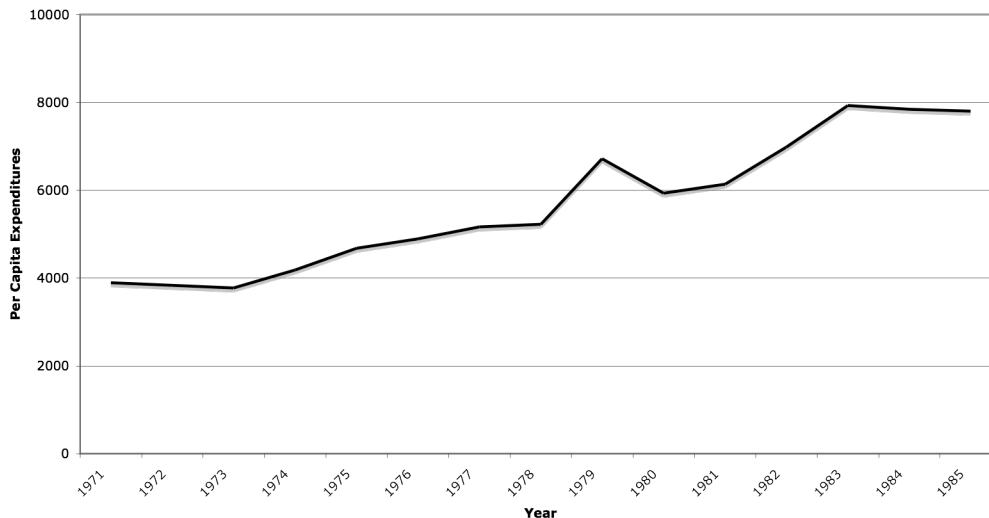
While expanding public services and keeping taxes low are popular policies for any politician, Lougheed had an additional advantage in that his particular situation necessitated a significant level of political conflict with the federal government. The federal and provincial governments both felt that they had a claim to the increased

revenues.¹⁷ Under the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments established at the time, provinces had access to royalties from natural resources and direct taxes, while the federal government had responsibility for direct taxes, indirect taxes and the regulation of interprovincial and international trade. Under this framework, jurisdiction over oil and gas revenues was highly ambiguous. Consequently, the rise in oil and natural gas prices created significant, trilateral political conflict between Alberta, Canada and the producing companies over the dramatically increased rents available from the ownership of oil resources.¹⁸ This created the context for a persuasive argument that Lougheed needed a broad mandate from the people to defend the province's interests. He exploited this skillfully to his electoral advantage, tapping into that permanent frustration and mistrust of external institutions that characterizes Alberta's political culture.

¹⁷ The following account of the political conflicts over jurisdiction of natural resource revenues relies on Richards and Pratt (1979, 215-249) and Meekison, Romanow and Moull (1985).

¹⁸ The conflict over resource revenues was exacerbated by constitutional confusion over jurisdiction. For example, a Calgary-based oil producer challenged a Saskatchewan legislative and regulatory package that placed an additional surcharge on oil produced within the province. Provocatively, the federal government joined the case, not just as an intervener but as a co-plaintiff, arguing that the package levied an indirect tax, not a royalty on oil. Although the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal dismissed the case unanimously, the Supreme Court of Canada reversed the decision, agreeing with the federal government that the charge was a tax, not a royalty. The result infuriated Saskatchewan and gave Alberta cause for serious concern.

**Figure 2-2: Government of Alberta Real (2006\$) Per Capita Expenditures
1971-1985**



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 384-0023 - Provincial government revenue and expenditure, annual (dollars) (table), CANSIM (database), Using E-STAT (distributor). and Statistics Canada. Table 326-0020 - Consumer price index (CPI), 2005 basket, computed annual average (2002=100 unless otherwise noted) (table), CANSIM (database), Using E-STAT (distributor).

The conflicts with the federal government over access to the increased revenues began almost immediately. In 1972, Alberta lifted a cap on royalties that Social Credit had implemented as an incentive to private companies. Later, after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war set off another spike in oil prices, the federal government intervened, freezing the domestic price of crude oil (lower than the world price), removing the tax deductibility provisions for royalties paid to provincial governments from the tax code and introducing an export tax. Feeling that this was both an unjustified intrusion into provincial jurisdiction and a move by the federal government to capture the increased rents, Lougheed's government retaliated and increased provincial royalties again. Squeezed by both the federal and provincial governments, the petroleum industry responded by slowing operations and shifting exploration and production out of the province. After

this point, the domestic price of oil became a matter of negotiation between the provincial and federal governments, with the domestic price of oil slowly increasing to the higher world price to give the oil-consuming provinces time to adjust.

This policy of confrontation and negotiation with the federal government enabled Lougheed to make a plausible argument that he needed the strongest possible mandate, and this argument was an integral part of Lougheed's re-election strategy. For example, in 1975, three days after meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau in Lethbridge before a conference on energy, Lougheed called an early election insisting on a strengthened mandate to negotiate with other governments.

Mr. Speaker, my feeling is clear that their own party [Social Credit], the federal government's own party in Alberta as well, is not supporting us in the position of energy; that there are some exceptions on the other side but that we are not getting the support we think Albertans should have in this important time. So, Mr. Speaker I've come to a conclusion that the Premier of Alberta must be sure that he and his ministers have the confidence of the majority of Albertans before going into that crucial meeting on April 10th, 1975 (Lougheed 1975, 697).

At the same time, Lougheed announced the creation of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, cut taxes and increased spending on popular programs in time for the election call.

The same two themes of prosperity and defense against an external threat predominated in the 1979 election. Just six days before the election was called, Lougheed announced \$1-billion in grants to municipalities to wipe out their debts. Alberta was simultaneously in the middle of constitutional negotiations over the patriation of the constitution. In 1978, six months before the 1979 provincial election, Lougheed explicitly threatened to

call a provincial election on the constitutional negotiations (Hustak 1979). When he did call an election in 1979, he again explicitly linked the vote with his need for a strong mandate in the constitutional negotiations. The *Globe and Mail* described the campaign as follows:

[Lougheed] tells the crowds that they have worked hard and they have earned their prosperity. But most of all he tells them that he needs a strong re-election mandate to protect that wealth from threatening outside forces. With his return to power in next Wednesday's provincial election almost assured, Mr. Lougheed can afford to ignore his political opponents. His Progressive Conservatives are campaigning not so much against the other parties as they are against the outsiders (Sallot 1979).

The salience of both pillars of Lougheed's re-election strategy – prosperity and defense against external threats – are particularly clear in the course of events leading up to the 1982 election. In 1980, in response to a second oil price shock, Trudeau introduced the National Energy Program (NEP). That policy increased federal access to the new revenues by levying new taxes on the export of oil and natural gas and providing incentives for companies to shift oil and gas exploration to federal lands in the Northwest Territories and offshore. It is difficult to overstate the animosity that this created in the west, an animosity that was exacerbated by the fact that the Liberals had failed to win a single constituency west of Winnipeg in the 1980 federal election, leaving the federal government with no western voice. Lougheed responded by announcing that Alberta would reduce the production of oil, forcing the rest of Canada to import oil at higher prices.

Eventually, the two levels of government reached a compromise solution on the NEP and then agreed to the 1982 constitutional accord, which did include increased protection for provincial ownership of natural resources. Nevertheless, some saw this negotiated resolution to the conflict as a weakening of Lougheed's defence of the province's interests and a form of provincial treason. These sentiments contributed to a surprise win in a rural by-election by the Western Canada Concept, a western separatist party in 1981 (Interview 1, Wood 1985, 226). At the same time, high interest rates and a recession were starting to increase unemployment. Nevertheless, high oil prices meant that Alberta still had a surplus and could draw on funds in the Alberta Heritage Savings and Trust Fund. Lougheed increased spending 17% in 1982 and his government accessed the Heritage Trust Fund to create popular programs to shield farmers, homeowners and small businesses from high interest rates (Nikiforuk et al. 1987, 29).

On occasion, Lougheed's state-led diversification policies also led to conflicts with the federal government. For example, in 1975, the provincial government purchased a controlling interest in Pacific Western Airlines, a Vancouver-based regional airline. Lougheed felt that the purchase was necessary to ensure that the province's transportation needs were met and that it, instead of British Columbia, could be positioned as a "gateway to the north." In response, the federal government argued that the province was overstepping its bounds and had to apply to the Canadian Transport Commission for approval to purchase the airline. The case was complicated when, under instruction from the provincial government, the company moved its headquarters from Vancouver to Calgary, sparking opposition from federal Liberal MPs in British Columbia. The federal

government stopped the move, further worsening relations between Alberta and Ottawa. The case was finally resolved in Alberta's favour at the Supreme Court of Canada in 1977 (Elton 1979, 126).

Premier Lougheed's strategy of economic development and diversification involved a substantial increase in public expenditures, conflict with a federal Liberal government over jurisdiction and was premised on a positive view of state intervention in key matters. This reinforced Lougheed's argument that he required a strong popular mandate. Perhaps more importantly, these arguments played on deep, historical currents in Alberta political culture; namely, a hostility toward external threats from the federal government and Eastern-based railways and financial institutions (Dacks 1985). The net effect was to minimize the potential for any kind of class conflict to manifest itself in the party system and to create a strong coalition of voters supporting his party.¹⁹

2.2 The Media Environment

The model of incentives and opportunities introduced in chapter one suggests two hypotheses: governments have a strong incentive to shape public opinion with public relations strategies in media environments where television is a more dominant medium than newspapers, and politicians have a strong incentive to do the same as the independence and nonpartisanship of the news media increases.

¹⁹ Lougheed was explicitly committed to establishing a cross-class coalition for the Progressive Conservative party and admonished party members to do a better job of attracting a wider range of classes to the party ranks in a speech to a convention (Lougheed 1977, 6)

Evidence is only available for the Canadian, not the Alberta market, and this evidence suggests that during Premier Lougheed's tenure, newspapers in Canada had a wider audience than television (see Figure B-4). However, when placed in a comparative context, these data suggest that Canadian television was more influential than in most European media markets. In 1984, newspapers attracted 26% of Canadian advertising expenditures compared to 18% for television. By comparison, European markets averaged 40% of national advertising expenditures for newspapers and only 20% for television in the same year (World Advertising Research Center 2003).²⁰ As a result, it is best to characterize Alberta as a balanced media market under Premier Lougheed.

Reflecting this influence, this is the one area where Lougheed demonstrated a proclivity to intervene in the public sphere to shape public opinion. During the 1971 election campaign, the Progressive Conservatives invested heavily in television advertising and, while he was premier, Lougheed appeared for 30-minute interviews with journalists and, on important occasions, made province-wide television addresses (Wood 1985, 75).

The second hypothesis concerns the degree to which a government faces a reliable and deferential or an independent, non-partisan press. When governments face a deferential news media, the need for public relations tactics is lessened, because politicians can be more confident of sympathetic news coverage. In this respect, relations between Premier

²⁰ The Canadian Newspaper Association provided the Canadian data to the author. The European data are drawn from a visual graph presented in the European Advertising and Media Forecast (World Advertising Research Center 2003). Raw data are not provided, making the reporting of exact percentages here impossible.

Lougheed and the media can be divided in two phases. Originally, Lougheed had close relationships with large segments of the news media, particularly with the management and ownership. The *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* had historic affiliations with the Conservative Party stretching back to the province's founding (Bruce 1968 113, 135). Although this tie had weakened with the decline of open partisanship in the Canadian newspaper industry, they were largely supportive of Lougheed and the Progressive Conservative party (Fetherling 78-106). The editor of the *Edmonton Journal*, Andrew Snaddon, was especially close to the premier. Hustak quotes him as follows: "I'm an Albertan inside the Canadian context the same way Peter is; we come from the same background and share the same reaction to things. Of course I support him" (1979, 193). One journalist at the newspaper referred to the close relationship between the two as "obscene" (Hustak 1979, 193). The *Calgary Albertan*, by contrast, was a conservative newspaper that Social Credit had once owned. It was the only paper of the three to endorse Social Credit in 1971 and continually criticized Lougheed's interventionist strategies (Hustak 1979, 193). Lougheed also had a close relationship with television owners and producers. The owners of Calgary television station CFCN had granted him the use of the television station's facilities to practice in front of cameras. There were also close relationships between Lougheed and an Edmonton television station: Hustak quotes three separate reporters who noted that there was pressure to minimize coverage for the opposition, particularly the NDP, while they were working for CFRN (1979, 191).

Later, relations between the news media and the government became much more strained. In 1976, Patrick O'Callaghan became the publisher of the *Edmonton Journal*

and brought with him a decidedly non-partisan approach that valued aggressive and independent news media, unafraid to criticize governments. This led to an enduring moment in Alberta political history.²¹ Following Lougheed's 1979 victory, when the opposition won only five seats, O'Callaghan published an article in the *Edmonton Journal* in which he emphasized that the newspaper would take on the role of being the opposition.

In the end, with the voter reluctant – as always – to put even a semblance of strength into the opposition, the best hope for the preservation of an Alberta that is not isolationist in its authoritarianism, parochial in its federalism, introspective in its own infallibility or hampered by a basic inability to examine its own conscience and find itself wanting in social idealism or accountability, remains in the hands of the irrepressible and non-elected free press. It is an aggressive, uninhibited, non-intimidated, free-wheeling, slightly cynical, querulous and – above all – non-partisan press that is the best hope for seeing that no matter how powerful a government becomes in numbers it will always stay within the bounds of service to the people. That is a role the *Journal* intends to continue to play, owing no allegiance to any party or individual, acting truly and independently on behalf of the people and with no personal axes to grind (O'Callaghan 1979).

In order to live up to the commitment carefully to scrutinize the government, O'Callaghan significantly increased the size of the newspaper's legislative press gallery. In 1975, the *Edmonton Journal* had two members in the press gallery; by 1981, it had five (Royal Commission on Newspapers and Fletcher 1980).

In 1982, O'Callaghan left the *Edmonton Journal* and became the publisher of the *Calgary Herald* and took his commitments to non-partisan, independent journalism with him. The editor of the *Calgary Herald* under O'Callaghan described his philosophy of

²¹ Several interview subjects raised this moment as pivotal (Interviews 1, 13 and 14).

journalism as follows: “He believed we should be out taking unpopular positions in the community and that would move the community towards the centre. No matter what way the stream was flowing, he believed someone should swim the other way” (Peterson quoted in Craig 1999). In 1999, O’Callaghan’s wife publicly criticized a new management regime at the *Calgary Herald* for turning its back on his philosophy of an independent and non-partisan media and adopting the premise that newspapers had to reflect its community.

My late husband, J. Patrick O’Callaghan, publisher of the *Herald* from 1982 to 1989, would no doubt roll over in his proverbial grave if he were to read this sanctimonious and self-serving rationalization for publishers bellying up to the country club bar with their golfing buddies and pandering to the head-office bean counters -- and all of this masquerading as journalistic integrity. Patrick did not believe that it was the role of a newspaper to reflect the political and economic biases of the community. Rather, he felt it was the responsibility of the newspaper to present readers with the facts and with informed opinions about a variety of issues that affected the readership, regardless of how popular or unpopular such views might be (O’Callaghan 1999).

1979 brought another substantial change to the media industry – the rise of the *Sun* chain of newspapers. That chain bought the free-market oriented *Calgary Albertan* (which had been owned by the Social Credit movement) and transformed it into the *Calgary Sun* and added a sister newspaper in Edmonton. Both papers brought a decidedly free-market, populist editorial voice to the landscape and increased competition among journalists within the gallery.

In short, Premier Lougheed demonstrated an affinity and willingness to use television to intervene in the public sphere, reflecting the comparatively strong influence of television in the Alberta and Canadian media markets during his government. At the

same time, he could count on deference from the newspaper industry and close relationships with television managers and owners. Although television continued to gain in influence over the course of his administration, so too did the independence and non-partisanship of the news media, suggested by the philosophy of O’Callaghan, in his capacity as publisher of both the *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* and the introduction of the *Edmonton* and *Calgary Suns*. The latter development increased competition among journalists and introduced unabashedly free-market and populist voices into the Alberta news media; Lougheed, of course, was neither zealously devoted to the free market nor a populist in any way. As a consequence, he could never really rely on these newspapers to be deferential.

2.3 Party System

The model introduced in chapter one suggests that two separate characteristics of the party system are related to government public relations: the strength of political parties, as measured by turnout, and the level of partisan competition. First, the model suggests that incentives to adopt public relations strategies increase directly with partisan competition. Second, it suggests that weak political parties, as measured by low voter turnout, have the same effect. This suggests that there were competing incentives during Lougheed’s government. On the one hand, he never faced serious threats to re-election. But on the other hand, the Alberta electorate has historically been hostile to political parties, apathetic, prone to wild swings at key moments and lacking deep bases of support for particular political parties. Accordingly, McCormick (1979) called the Alberta party system a “no party system.” He argued that the tendency of Alberta governing parties to

stay in power for such long terms is not due to deep, long-lasting links between the party and a particular social base, but due to particularly strong, charismatic individual leadership, in the form of people such as Aberhart, Manning and Lougheed.

The main feature of such a system, and a central component of an explanation of its operation, is the lack of stable long-term, deep-seated partisan affiliation on the part of a large proportion of the electorate. Voters have little durable identification with any particular party, but are instead, willing to switch fairly freely from one party to another. ... One feature of such a condition is the fluidly shifting opposition vote; a second is the capacity of voters to swing freely between government and opposition. A third evidence of a lack of long-term identification with a party is the phenomenon of vote switching between provincial and federal general elections (McCormick 93).

The history of Lougheed's own party is testimony to this interpretation; he built the party out of a shell organization. During the 1950s, the federal Progressive Conservatives were hindering provincial organization because of an arrangement between Prime Minister Diefenbaker and Premier Manning. By the time Lougheed became leader, the party had precisely four active constituency associations (Serfaty 1976, 268). Reflecting this tradition of a "no party system," voter turnout remained the lowest of all provinces in Canada during Premier Lougheed's tenure (see Figure B-5).

Thus, according to this model of government public relations, there were competing incentives during Premier Lougheed's tenure. The lack of partisan competition may have made aggressive interventions in the public sphere unnecessary, while the historically ambivalent attitude towards political parties may have given the premier reason to pursue the opposite course of action.

2.4 Government Public Relations Under Premier Lougheed

From the beginning of his mandate, Premier Lougheed attempted a balancing act between the narrow, political desires of some of his supporters to use government public relations to improve his party's standings and other commitments to a distinct space for government communications, with respect for the idea of a neutral civil service. Ultimately, the historical record suggests that Premier Lougheed's government subscribed to "restrained" forms of advertising" (Calder 1986, 63). By contrast, interventions into the public sphere with the full weight of the government public apparatus were intermittent and restricted to personal television appearances by the premier. Instead, Lougheed's government adopted a number of reforms inspired by a desire for administrative efficiency, professionalism and quality. Thus, Premier Lougheed did expand and centralize the government of Alberta's public relations activities, but with a surprising commitment to a distinct space for a neutral civil service, minimizing the political character of his reforms.

When he took power in 1971, Lougheed asked a close political associate, David Wood, to examine government advertising practices as they existed under the Social Credit government.²² The resulting report identified a number of problems. The previous Social Credit regime had relied on the Publicity Bureau, an agency that dated back to 1906 and had been set up in the Department of Agriculture as a means to attract settlers to come to Alberta (Interview 1, Alberta Public Accounts 1955). Under Social Credit,

²² Wood had been an advertising professional who had worked with Lougheed at the Mannix Corporation prior to his entry into politics.

this agency evolved to become responsible for the selection of advertising agencies when a department needed such services. It provided no creative work and the situation contributed to duplication, as departments felt compelled to hire their own specialists. According to Wood's report, when the Publicity Bureau appointed an agency for a department, the agency tended to stay with the department, without any formal process or review (Wood 1971, 3). As a result, 98% of advertising expenditures were concentrated in two agencies, the material produced was of poor quality and there was a duplication of resources (Wood 1971, 6). This situation was compounded by the fact that the field of public relations had been used as a dumping ground for Social Credit political staff through its thirty-six year administration (Interview 23). Wood described the situation as follows: "With few exceptions, there was no skill, no measurement, no standard, no evaluation, no co-ordination, and a great deal of expensive duplication" (Wood 1985, 87).

Wood recommended to Lougheed that he create a central agency, responsible to either the Premier's Office or Executive Council, to be responsible for the government's public relations staff and for coordinating, reviewing, improving and overseeing departmental advertising campaigns. "A central service would appear to solve many existing problems; do a far better job of communicating and reduce substantially government costs in this entire area" (7). Lougheed accepted the recommendation and created the Public Affairs Bureau by regulation out of the former Publicity Bureau, a film and photographic branch of another department and all departmental public relations staff.²³

²³ The organization was originally called the Bureau of Public Affairs and was renamed in 1978. For the sake of ease, the term "Public Affairs Bureau" is used throughout.

Later Wood described the Public Affairs Bureau as follows:

The concept of the Bureau of Public Affairs was fairly simple: the best possible people would be hired (curtailed only by the salary schedules we could establish through the Civil Service Commission), and these people would be assigned to the various departments. They would be responsible to the department for providing a satisfactory communication service and to the bureau for professional performance and development. The bureau would also centralize and rationalize printing and graphic services; would provide audio-visual controls, and try to prevent the proliferation of studios, duplicating machines, artists, cameras, projectors, and all such paraphernalia and people (Wood 1985, 88).

As it matured, the Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) was organized into three distinct functions, which have existed more or less through its entire history. First, there was a group comprised of the public relations professionals hired at the Public Affairs Bureau and seconded to the individual departments. Second, there was a group that provided technical services for the communications fields. Originally, this group contained a photographic development lab, a film library, the Queen's Printer, an advertising policy committee, a display unit to coordinate trade show exhibitions and graphic design experts. Finally, there was an administrative services unit to carry out the basic management functions (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1973). While the PAB had grown substantially by the end of Premier Lougheed's tenure, the organization's budgets bear out its emphasis on technical and creative services, as opposed to public relations staff – approximately, 60% of the organization's budget was dedicated to the former (see Figure B-2).

None of this is to suggest that strict electoral concerns were totally absent from these reforms. One of the PAB's first services distributed press releases and voice clips to

news across the province. Some journalists found this move highly controversial. The *Calgary Herald* chastised Lougheed's government in an editorial of May 21, 1973. "It is generally agreed that a government should keep the public informed, but that it shouldn't use public funds to deliver partisan political messages. There is a fine line between the two and the province's Bureau of Public Affairs has been lurching along the two." The provincial Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) objected to the service and formally asked the government to stop the practice and replace it with toll-free access to provincial cabinet ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly (Hogle 1973). The government commissioned an internal report on this question and, although it found that the wire service and the voice clips were highly valued by newspapers and radio stations in remote areas, it also raised concerns about the potential for partisan abuse and for negative political reaction. As a solution, it recommended opening up the service to opposition politicians (Socio-Systems Ltd. 1973, 21). While this was never done, the government did adopt the recommendation of the RTNDA and established a province-wide telephone network shortly thereafter allowing citizens – and journalists from peripheral news media – to call government offices across the province free of charge.

There may also have been political pressure to reform advertising practices because of the close relationship between a number of advertising and public relations professionals and the Lougheed campaigns of 1967 and 1971. In addition to David Wood, four other advertising professionals were included: Bob Ranson, Art Smith, Bill Payne and John Francis. Ranson worked on the communications committee prior to the 1971 election

campaign and was one of Lougheed's fundraisers. He worked in the Calgary office of the national advertising firm, Baker Lovick (Wood 1971, 74-75; Shepard 1984).

Ranson's firm was in a curious position when Lougheed took power. Its Edmonton office received the lion's share of provincial government business (56%) and simultaneously handled advertising for the Social Credit party. Ranson, in the firm's Calgary office, supported Lougheed and the Progressive Conservatives, and received virtually no government advertising (Interview 1; Wood 1971). Wood's report on government advertising specifically mentioned shifting some government business to Ranson in the Calgary office of Baker Lovick (1971, appendix).

Art Smith was a Calgary Conservative politician who worked for Foster Advertising and was hired to help with the 1971 election campaign (Wood 1985, 74-75; Hustak 1979, 122). According to Wood's report, Foster Advertising was receiving only 2% of government advertising expenditures (Wood 1971, 6). The latter two, Bill Payne and John Francis, were affiliated with another advertising agency – Francis, Williams, Johnson and Payne. Francis headed a publicity committee for Lougheed when he took over the party (Hustak 1979, 74) while Payne worked as Lougheed's press secretary during the 1971 election campaign (Serfaty 1976, 333). While the first two officials, Smith and Ranson, had almost no government contracts, Francis and Payne's firm was receiving the second-largest share of government advertising (43%).

The presence of so many advertising and public relations professionals on Lougheed's campaign who were not receiving government business certainly raises suspicions that the reforms to government advertising were motivated by patronage concerns. It is not

difficult to imagine campaign volunteers, previously frozen out of government business, putting pressure on the new government to improve access to government advertising. At the same time, it is difficult to make the case that the reforms to government public relations were motivated solely by patronage. In fact, the agency Francis, Williams, Johnson and Payne, (which has been the second-largest government client up until the reforms) lost a significant tourism contract just months after Lougheed took power and launched the advertising reforms. The agency subsequently complained bitterly to Lougheed, pointing out their earlier support for Lougheed (Francis 1972). Moreover, expanding government advertising expenditures from two firms to many firms is good governance, even if political relationships exist between the government and those many firms. Perhaps one way to frame the policy is in terms of the close relationship between Lougheed's government and new middle and professional classes as a whole. On this interpretation, creating a more professional advertising function within government coincided with a political interest in expanding the number of advertising firms getting government business because that profession was part of a social class close to Lougheed's government. Richards and Pratt (1979) argue that one of the forces behind the new government's more aggressive provincialist stance was to protect the interests of a rising indigenous bourgeois class – an *arriviste* bourgeoisie. “In Alberta ... local entrepreneurial energy is being generated by the province's upwardly mobile urban middle class – in effect, a rising urban bourgeoisie comprising leading indigenous entrepreneurs, managers and upper-income professionals – linking private and public sectors in a quasi-corporatist alliance” (1979, 167). Reflecting this relationship, the two

largest occupations within the 1971 pool of Progressive Conservative candidates were “lawyers and other professionals” (32.6%) and “self-employed, small businessmen (26.1%)” (McKown and Leeson 1979, 213).

There is other evidence to suggest that the Lougheed government was careful to prevent the new organization from drifting into excessive partisan marketing and maintain a commitment to administrative efficiency and quality in government communications. One official in Lougheed’s government noted this:

I think that the Bureau was fairly unpopular inside the government for a number of reasons. I think a concept of that kind of centralization is bound to be. One of the ironies is that some of the unpopularity was because David [Wood] and Bill [Payne] tried to keep it apolitical. So there was a lot of confrontation with ministers at times. I think there was an implied support that kept the place fairly independent and apolitical. There were lots of questions by ministers and sometimes by some of Lougheed’s own staff about why Tory firms weren’t getting enough business (Interview 1).

Most of the early reforms to communications practices reflect this commitment. In 1974, an advertising policy and committee were put in place to ensure a periodic review of advertising contracts and in 1975 a province-wide telephone network (the RITE network) was launched to save long distance costs and to allow citizens access to government offices via telephone operators in regional centers. Other early reforms were inspired by the modernizing sensibility within the Lougheed government and reflected the widespread sense within the province that it was becoming more urban, sophisticated and cosmopolitan.

A lot of it [the Public Affairs Bureau] was driven by David Wood and it was his concept and I think it was to some extent a corporate model and not necessarily as politically driven as people might have thought. [Wood] was less of a political guy than a lot of people in Lougheed's government. I think what drove him was a desire to bring Alberta into a different era in terms of the ways that the province projected itself. He had a very profound feeling of being from this place [Alberta] (Interview 1).

In this vein, the PAB began a visiting journalists program, subsidizing the costs of journalists from outside the province to visit and report on the province, primarily for tourism and business stories and held a competition to devise a new logo for the Government of Alberta. "The Alberta logo that happened right at the start is an example of the kind of thing that David envisioned. And when you look at that, that's 35 years old and it's stood up pretty well, it's sort of like the CN logo. Not many logos have that kind of staying power" (Interview 1).

Similarly, one of the early priorities was to get ministers to stop promoting themselves by placing their names and pictures on government public relations. Although such a practice may satisfy a minister's ego, in Wood's eyes, it was cheap politics that annoyed, rather than ingratiated, voters; in his words it was "bad public relations" (Wood 1972). Moreover, he felt it was wasteful because every time a minister changed portfolios, documents would have to be reprinted. Just months after beginning his work as the Managing Director, Wood distributed a memo to all cabinet ministers urging them to refrain from attaching their names, or the names of their ministers, to any government publication.

While this suggests a desire for non-partisan and restrained forms of government communications, this episode also reveals the limits to central agencies' influence. Central agencies often clash with departments, but central agencies do not always win. One year after the first memo regarding ministerial promotion and publicity, Wood sent a second memo, reiterating that cabinet had backed the policy (1973). The practice must have continued unchecked because in 1974, a third memo was sent stressing the need to end the practice and instructed directors of communication to discuss the practice with the ministers. However, the document concluded by conceding that, in instances where ministers insisted on having their names attached to government documents, the central Public Affairs Bureau was, ultimately, powerless to stop them. "After such review, however, if a Minister insists on his identification on a government publication, the Bureau has no authority to obviate [*sic*] the Minister's wishes in this regard" (Payne 1974). In short, the Public Affairs Bureau's influence was limited; it had nominal authority in the form of an order-in-council, but this was quite weak.²⁴ An internal report on the structure of government communications from 1979 made this observation: "David Wood had several severe impediments to face: a broad mandate with almost no resources in place; the inheritance of a number of old-time and disgruntled staff; and the resistance of many departments" (Calder 1979, 2). A 1982 study by the Manitoba government, which examined Alberta's model of government communications, came to

²⁴ By contrast, the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs was also a new central agency created by Loughheed but was given statutory authority to oversee all departmental negotiations between the federal government and Alberta. In 1989, the Public Affairs Bureau requested – and was denied – statutory authority similar that accorded to the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs to increase its power.

the same conclusion (Weppler et al. 1982, 93). Epp's portrayal of the Public Affairs bureau as an influential central agency may have overstated the case (1984).

Instead, the Lougheed government was trying to reform government public relations to improve administrative efficiencies and insulate the organization from political pressure but finding it difficult to do and meeting resistance from departments, who resented the intrusion of a central agency, and ministers who wanted it for political purposes. The challenge was to find a structure that met the combination of influence and protection from political abuse. One way to meet this challenge was to shift the Public Affairs Bureau from the Executive Council Office to the Department of Government Services to improve its administrative efficiencies in 1975 and to give it a less political "visage" (Calder 1979, 6). This relationship did not last because of conflicts between the Deputy Minister and the Public Affairs Bureau staff. Wood – who had left government at this time – wrote Lougheed a private letter advising him of the conflicts.

There are dangers for your government in the way in which Public Affairs is now led and directed. ... [the Deputy Minister], with understandable zeal, sees the melding of Public Affairs into the department of Government Services as his primary and most important objective. He has asked the three senior officers of the Bureau to sign a contract that states this as a first objective. The contract nowhere mentions any of the principles for which the Bureau was first created. You will appreciate the political nuances of a policy that does not suggest the importance of information to the public, nor reaffirms the policy of open government through a two-way flow of information...

[The Deputy Minister] understands and probably functions very well in managing resources that can be shipped, boxed, weighted and measured. He obviously does not understand abstract creative functions such as public relations, art, creative printing, interpretive audio-visual concepts, etc. He is trying to mate an elephant to a meadowlark and the marriage simply will not work (Wood 1977, 2).

The letter must have persuaded the Lougheed, because one month later the situation changed. The Minister of Government Services ordered some changes in the reporting authority, bypassing the deputy minister and increasing the authority of the managing director in personnel management and contract approval (Kyle 1978). At the same time, there were internal assurances to the PAB that this would not lead to excessive political interference. In the memo detailing the changes, the minister wrote: “Let me assure you of my general support for central communications services (including production). As I stated in our meeting, I also see the need for some autonomy for such a communications body” (Schmid, Horst 1977). For example, he noted that he would restrict his contact with the departmental public relations staff to monthly meetings. Just prior to the 1982 election, the managing director requested a new relationship – either to be assigned to a junior minister as a secondary responsibility or to report to the Department of Government Services as an independent entity, again in the interests of autonomy (Calder 1982). He got something approaching his wish when the PAB was again attached to Executive Council as an independent office with a junior minister at its head. These episodes suggest that the public relations staff within the government of Alberta sought autonomy from the political level of government to prevent political interference and that this wish was generally accepted.

The restrained nature of government public relations is reflected in how Lougheed's administration used other activities associated with the public relations state. For example, the Lougheed government tended not to make extensive use of public opinion research. In 1978 and 1980, the government commissioned omnibus surveys and made the results public. Instead, the Progressive Conservative party, as opposed to the government, began commissioning an annual, partisan opinion survey.

Also, where most of the current literature on the public relations state describes the rise of manipulative news management techniques, Lougheed's government preferred more controlled and distant relationships with journalists, in spite of close relationships with managers and owners. When he did meet the news media, Lougheed preferred forums that he could control. One broadcast journalist from the era recalled: "If you were a reporter, and you wanted to get him you would get him on his time, when he decided, if he decided and it was the same with a lot of his ministers, everything was very tightly controlled" (Interview 6). A newspaper journalist recalled his relations with the press as follows. "He always had figured out ahead of time what he wanted to say, he was willing to meet you when he wanted to get his message across (Interview 2)." Reflecting his desire to meet the press on his own terms, when he did meet with the news media, it was generally in formal news conferences that were strictly controlled. According to a radio reporter from the time, "Lougheed would not talk to you unless it was in a formal news conference" (Interview 4).

The former premier explained his preference for the news conference in his own words:

I could do much better at news conferences because I was more in control ...in a news conference, the person being interviewed is in a much bigger advantage. His press secretary is acknowledging various people to speak to him ... he's able to concentrate on a question and an answer. He can finish that answer before he's interrupted and then go onto the next question. The mistakes that I made and I see often made, I made in a scrum because a question will come out of your left ear and you're not psychologically set for it and it throws you off balance (Lougheed quoted in Savage-Hughes and Taras 1992, 204).

Government officials rarely, if ever, used leaks for intentional purposes. A public relations official recalled the tactic with distaste. "I never did a leak in all the years I worked in the Bureau. It may be very old school, but I never liked it. I felt that if you had something to say, then you got it out, and you took your chances with the media" (Interview 1). A senior political staff member of both Premiers Lougheed and Getty made a similar comment: "If something was really good, why leak it? Why not put it right out there to talk about it? Leaks can backfire, more often than not they're bad for a government" (Interview 7).

2.5 Conclusion

When Premier Lougheed took power, the public relations function of government was distributed throughout the government and had been used as a dumping ground for Social Credit party activists for decades (Interview 22). Two advertising agencies, one of which simultaneously handled Social Credit's election advertising, received 98% of the government's advertising expenditures. The formation of a central agency headed by one of the Premier's allies could accomplish four complementary objectives. First, a number of close political supporters could be rewarded through the broader distribution of

advertising contracts. Second, this simultaneously reduced the partisan character of government advertising by opening up government business to more advertising agencies on a competitive basis. Third, by emphasizing a made-in-Alberta policy and distributing government business more broadly, government advertising could promote the development of local enterprises in that sector. Fourth and finally, it could increase skill and professionalism that could be brought into the field of government public relations.

As an example, one of the first tasks that Wood set for himself was to get departments to stop publicizing ministers' names and photographs in government information. Moreover, two years after it was formed, there was an attempt to merge the Public Affairs Bureau with the government services bureaucracy to improve its administration. When that experiment failed, it was made an independent body but with a guarantee of autonomy from the ministerial level; the responsible minister restricted his meetings with departmental public relations staff to monthly meetings. Through Premier Lougheed's administration, the bulk of the PAB's budget was dedicated to technical and creative services such as the Queen's Printer bookstore, a province-wide telephone network for citizen access to government programs, and a program was set up to support foreign travel and business journalists to visit the province.

Indicative of the kind of work the Public Affairs Bureau was meant to achieve was the province's pavilion at the Vancouver exposition in 1986. It was an ambitious project, with a budget of \$3 million. At its conclusion, it was well regarded. An official involved with the project recalled:

I always felt that the best things that I could do was something interesting and creative and convince people that that really wasn't risky. So an example was when we did the Expo Pavilion in Vancouver, I remember the Toronto Star had a headline that read, "Who ever thought Alberta had a sense of humour?" And Robert Fulford who had written a book about Expo 68, thought that it was the best pavilion of them all. It was interesting and it was quite distinctive. That was a major contribution of the Bureau, opening up the pores and being less predictable. But that wasn't a particular interest to a lot of politicians, it didn't have a political purpose (Interview 1).

Table 2 summarizes each variable in the model of incentives and opportunities introduced in chapter one, the relationship of each variable to public relations activities, the predicted outcome and the observed outcome under Premier Lougheed. Only the majoritarian system, the weak political parties and the comparatively television-heavy media landscape supposedly created any incentives to intervene in the public sphere in shape public opinion.

In fact, the most significant public relations activities intended to strategically shape public opinion were Lougheed's television appearances. These took two different forms: periodic interviews by journalists at sympathetic television stations and periodic province-wide addresses on the occasion of major policy announcements, such as the formation of the Alberta Energy Company and the announcement that the province had ordered a reduction in oil production in retaliation to the federal government's introduction of the National Energy Program. The majoritarian system, weak political parties and the comparatively television-heavy Canadian media market make sense of these particular interventions. At the same time, these interventions bolstered the impression that Lougheed's government was *his* government, something he was keen to

perpetuate. Lougheed preferred to keep a strong hand on the policy process, and his television appearances helped create a direct relationship between the premier and the electorate (Pal 1992, 80).

Table 2: Model of Incentives and Opportunities Under Premier Lougheed

Condition	Measure	Hypothesized Relationship To Strategic Interventions Via Public Relations	Evidence
Institutional Configuration			
Type of Democracy	Majoritarian or Consensus-Based	In majoritarian systems, heads of government must accept blame and take credit by virtue of their place at the head of a unified government, requiring public relations strategies to manage these public perceptions.	-Strongly personalized approach to politics; strong control by premier of policy process
Party System	Party Strength (Turnout)	As turnout declines, governments become less secure about having a reliable electoral base which will support them, requiring public relations strategies to maintain electoral support.	-low turnout, no evidence this jeopardized government's reelection
	Level of Competition	As electoral defeat becomes increasingly possible, politicians can no longer discount public opinion to pursue their policy objectives and require public relations strategies to accomplish policy goals and secure reelection.	-low level of partisan competition, no evidence Lougheed ever faced serious threats to reelection
Media System	Independence of Press	As the independence of the press increases, politicians lose personal relationships and contacts with owners, managers and journalists, contributing to a greater willingness to publish critical news, requiring governments to adopt more sophisticated public relations strategies to manage the news.	-strong evidence of social links between owners and editors of news media and the premier. -evidence of weakening in 1979 with the publisher of the <i>Edmonton Journal</i> .
	Predominance of Television	An influential television media sector contributes to greater competition in the news media, shortens soundbites, and elevates the importance of visual components of news, all requiring politicians to make use of professional public relations.	-Lougheed preferred television -limited evidence of the importance of soundbites or competitive press culture.
Issue-specific conflict configurations			
	Loss imposition or prosperity	When governments seek to impose losses on electorally important constituencies, they risk electoral sanction or defeat and rely on public relations strategies to insulate themselves.	-close proximity of spending and provincial elections
	Do issues draw on traditions of political culture?	When politicians face agendas composed of issues that can be plausibly linked to traditions within political culture, aggressive public relations strategies are unnecessary because citizens are more likely to see their interests align with the government's.	-heavy emphasis on themes of defence against external threats, particularly close to provincial elections

Every other variable of the model, however, suggests that Lougheed had limited incentives (or need) to intervene to shape public opinion. The opposition parties were fragmented, preventing the formation of an opposition coalition; for the bulk of his administration, he had close relationships with a deferential media while the dominant political issues of prosperity and defense against an external enemy meant that Lougheed could win elections relatively easily by expanding public services and capitalizing on long-held sentiments of defending the province against external threats.

At the end of his time in government, the political situation had begun to change. First, instead of fighting with the Liberal government in Ottawa, Lougheed reached two agreements with it: a compromise version of the National Energy Program and the 1981 constitutional agreement. Second, the economy started to weaken because of high interest rates and the 1982 energy agreements that created incentives for the oil industry to drill outside of Alberta. Third, the news media had started to display a greater degree of independence and non-partisanship as the *Edmonton Journal*, under publisher Patrick O'Callaghan, increased the size of its press gallery in the wake of the 1979 election and publicly adopted a confrontational role. The same publisher took this spirit to the *Calgary Herald* in 1982.

The 1979 election represented the last of the Lougheed formula. Despite a healthy budget surplus and relatively high oil prices, the combined effects of high interest rates and the National Energy Program's incentives for oil and gas exploration in the north contributed to a significant rise in unemployment. By 1983, unemployment had risen to 11% and the premier's public standing began to suffer. During a public appearance in

1984 at a hockey game, several thousand fans jeered the Premier. Nikiforuk and Pratt describe this moment as a turning point in Alberta politics, where the public's disillusionment with the long-serving Premier was manifesting itself: "...[S]uddenly, people were no longer in the same awe of their premier" (1987, 25). These events foreshadowed the difficult times ahead for the Progressive Conservative government and the Alberta economy in general.

Chapter 3: Selling “The Best Expenditure Management Record In The Country” — Public Relations Under Premier Don Getty

The model introduced in chapter one suggests that Premier Getty had strong incentives to rely on public relations techniques to shape public opinion; the curious feature of his administration is that he failed to do so. For example, he faced a party system composed of weak parties (turnout declined even further), he faced greater partisan competition than Lougheed, the news media maintained its independent positions and he faced a vastly different political agenda which was dominated by retrenchment, compromise with other governments and the rise of popular concerns about the environment. Despite this changed environment, Getty adopted many practices from Premier Lougheed’s government and hesitated to adopt public relations tactics to shape public opinion.

While there was an increase in advertising expenditures up to 1989, the budget of the Public Affairs Bureau remained stable. More importantly, despite its status as a central agency, it was hampered in its ability to influence departmental communications programs, retained its civil service character and played a limited role in the political process. A cabinet communications committee was added in 1989 to improve the central coordination of government public relations, but this was demonstrably ineffective. By 1991 and 1992, the government did expand its central public opinion research capacity and give the Public Affairs Bureau more resources for strategic work, but these measures were adopted too late to have any political benefit for the Getty government.

The model of incentives and opportunities suggests that Premier Getty should have intervened to shape public opinion to help his political fortunes, and there were those around him advising him to do so. When Premier Getty finally did respond to this advice, it was too late. This delayed response helps to explain his dismal political fortunes. This chapter explores the conditions creating those incentives to manipulate public opinion in the public sphere, the minimal efforts made to do that, and the sources and the consequences of that failure. The first section examines the political agenda, the news media environment and the party system. The second section examines the evolution of government public relations and links to this broader political environment.

3.1 Political Issues

Premier Lougheed faced very favourable political issues of tremendous prosperity and an intergovernmental agenda built around conflict with a prime minister of a different partisan stripe, allowing him to mobilize voters around him against an external enemy. Getty, on the other hand, faced precisely the opposite agenda. Oil prices plummeted just as he became premier, and the constitutional issues of the day revolved around finding consensus, not prolonged conflict over jurisdiction, between the federal – Progressive Conservative -- government and other provinces.

While oil prices started to fall in 1982, the decline accelerated dramatically just as Getty became premier. Consequently, government revenues from natural resources fell from \$8 billion in Lougheed's last budget in 1985-1986 to \$3.9 billion in Getty's first

budget in 1986-1987 (Alberta Treasury 2003-2004).²⁵ This occurred after Lougheed's expenditure increases had increased voters' appetites for public services. The combination of high public spending left over from Premier Lougheed's government, low taxes and a collapse in natural resource revenues contributed to an uninterrupted series of budget deficits throughout Getty's tenure (see figure 3-1).

Figure 3-1: Alberta Government Budget Surplus (Deficit) 1984-1993



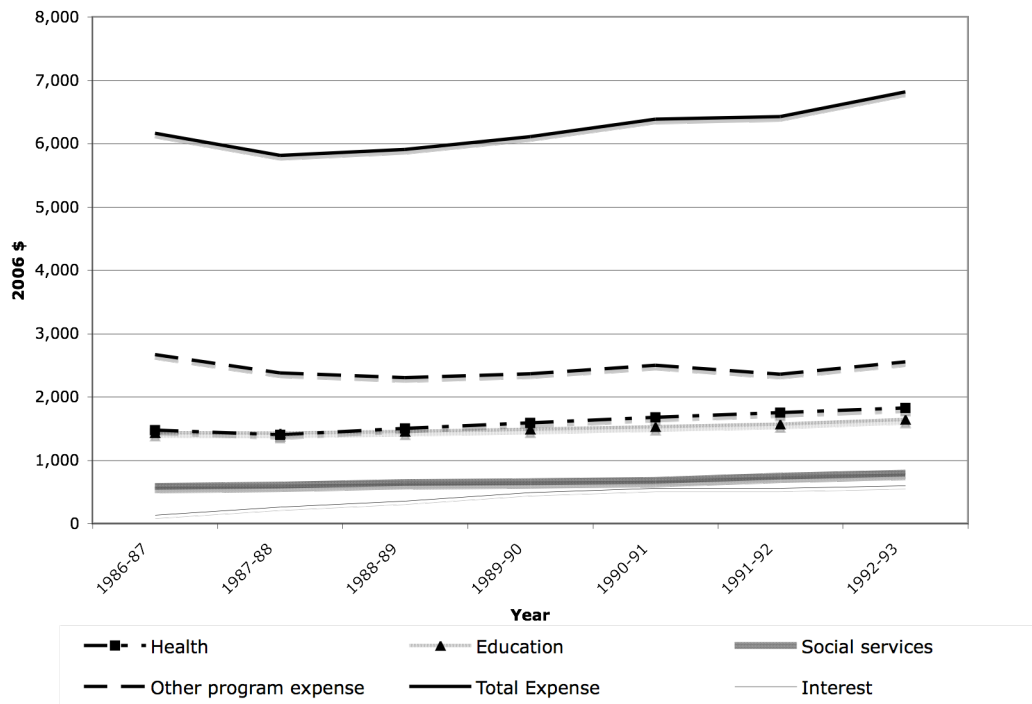
Source: Alberta Treasury 2001

This series of budget deficits has contributed to a historical image of the Getty administration as that of a profligate spender. However, this image is not entirely accurate and it owes its existence, to a large extent, to Getty's successor, Premier Klein, who used the Getty government as a contrast to justify its own agenda of deeper and harsher retrenchment measures. In reality, Getty's administration recognized that the budget deficit was a problem and pursued a three-pronged strategy to address it. First, it

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all figures in 2006 \$.

reduced spending in non-core areas of government expenditures while attempting to restrain growth in core areas of health, education and social services (see Figure 3-2). Second, in addition to restraining program expenditures, the Getty government also raised a number of taxes, increasing corporate and personal income taxes in 1987, health care premiums in 1990 and 1992, small business taxes in 1991 and cigarette, liquor and gasoline taxes in 1991 and 1992 (Alberta Treasury 1993). Third, in 1991 it relied on windfalls from one-time sales of assets – such as the privatization of the provincial telephone utility – and by transferring cash from other accounts such as the Heritage Savings and Trust Fund and the lotteries fund to the general revenue fund (Alberta Treasury 1991, 25). To communicate the way the government was trying to address the balanced budget, the government repeatedly boasted that it had “the best expenditure management record in the country,” slowing expenditures more than any other province (Alberta Treasury 1990, 22; 1991, 11; 1992, 23).

Figure 3-2: Real Per Capita Program Expenditures 1986-1993

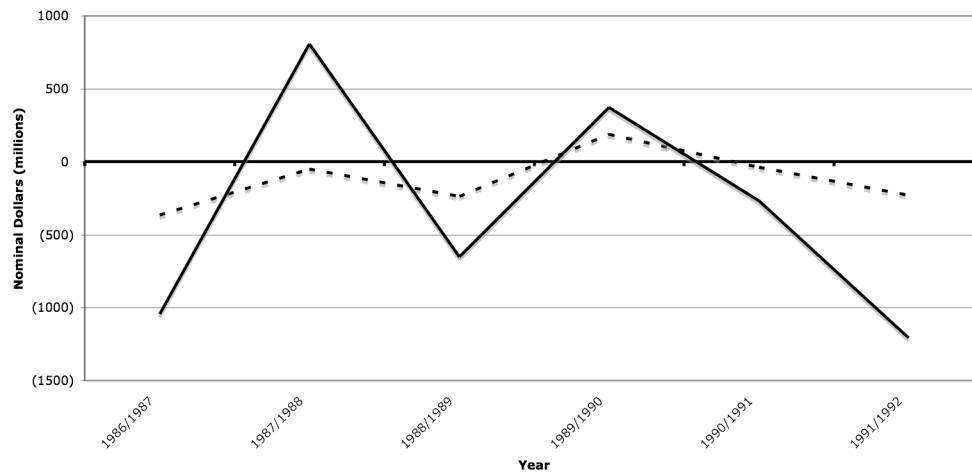


Source: Alberta Public Accounts

The Getty government’s reputation as one that spent recklessly is not justified; the premier inherited high levels of public expenditures and kept them restrained during his time in government. At the same time, he raised taxes and privatized the public telephone utility. Above all else, Getty’s government was one of retrenchment and fiscal restraint. Nevertheless, two factors combined to ensure that Getty’s government received no political credit for these measures. First, the government repeatedly overestimated both tax and natural resource revenues, leading to larger-than-expected budget deficits and hampering the credibility of each budget as one that seriously addressed the budget deficit (see Figure 3-3). The worst blow in this regard occurred in 1991. When the budget was introduced in March, the Provincial Treasurer claimed that it would be

balanced. But in October of that year the government conceded that its original revenue estimates for the year were off and a deficit was likely. While the Treasurer had predicted a surplus of \$33 million, the province eventually recorded a deficit of \$1.3 billion.

Figure 3-3: Overestimation (Underestimation) Of Tax And Natural Resource Revenues 1986-1992



Note: The overestimation (underestimation) is calculated by comparing the amount listed in each year's estimates with the amount reported in the following public accounts.

- - - Tax Revenues — Natural Resource Revenues

Source: Alberta Treasury 2001

Second, the Getty government had to deal with the consequences of a 1981 policy developed by the Lougheed government, whereby the provincial treasury began offering loan guarantees to private businesses as a way of offsetting the crippling effects of high-interest rates, in an effort to encourage diversified private investment (Alberta 1984, 107). The government charged a fee to the company and used the government's credit worthiness as a guarantee to private loans. When a business declared bankruptcy or failed to repay the loan, however, the government was forced to cover the costs. The Lougheed government issued a total of \$9.7 billion in loan guarantees, while the Getty

government tightened the process somewhat and added an additional \$2.5 billion in the next six years (Alberta Financial Review Commission 1993). The policy created substantial political difficulties for the Getty government and it contributed to the impression that the Getty government was wasteful.

The provincial government's involvement in a troubled cell phone manufacturing company, NovaTel, is the best example of how the loan guarantee policy contributed to serious political problems for the Getty government.²⁶ NovaTel started as a joint venture between the province's telephone utility and Nova Corporation, a pipeline firm. The venture's purpose was to obtain a share of the future market for cellular phones. Though the global market did prove to be substantial, the company never turned a single profit. In January 1989, Nova Corporation left the venture and sold its share to the provincial telephone company, Alberta Government Telephones (AGT). When the province issued a prospectus in 1990 for the privatization of AGT, it disclosed the value of all of AGT's holdings, including NovaTel. According to that prospectus, the company was to record a small profit for the first time in the second half of 1990. Shortly after the prospectus was issued, however, NovaTel conceded that it was headed for a loss. This posed a substantial problem for the government because it was trying to privatize the parent company. With the value of a major subsidiary suddenly in question, the privatization may have been jeopardized. Consequently, Alberta guaranteed the value of NovaTel by agreeing to buy it from AGT for the value in the original share prospectus. The

²⁶ This account is drawn from the Auditor-General's investigation of the affair (Alberta. Office of the Auditor General 1992).

government became the sole owner of a money-losing cell-phone manufacturer in the middle of a deep recession. Ultimately, the government was forced to sell the company to a private firm for a fraction of what it had originally invested in it. The full magnitude of the disaster became known in May 1992, when the provincial government sold NovaTel, taking a \$566 million loss (Vivone 1992). It is difficult to overestimate the furor that the NovaTel incident created. The Auditor-General's report into the affair was released in the politically explosive month of September 1992, just weeks after Getty announced his resignation and in the middle of the subsequent leadership campaign.

At the same time as Getty was presiding over an economy in which he was cutting spending, increasing taxes and dealing with business failures, he was forced to deal with a constitutional agenda that was marked by consensus and compromise with a fellow Progressive Conservative, rather than by conflict with a Liberal. In 1985, Prime Minister Mulroney signed the Western Accord, which deregulated oil and gas prices, lifted export controls and removed federal taxes in the field, all major concessions in energy policy by the federal government to Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia and a total reversal in federal government policy (Helliwell et al. 1986, 344). While this was a policy success for the provincial government, it ironically hurt politically – the Alberta government could no longer plausibly cast Ottawa as an enemy.

This impression was fortified when Premier Getty agreed to the Meech Lake Accord in 1987. Historically, Alberta's constitutional position had three major elements: equality of provinces, Senate reform to give provinces greater influence in central institutions and provincial ownership of natural resources (Alberta 1978). The 1982 constitution and the

1985 Western Accord addressed the question of natural resources, while Getty was satisfied that the distinct society clause in the Meech Lake Accord did not violate Alberta's concern for equal treatment of provinces and that the vague assurances for Senate reform were sufficient.

The Meech Lake agreement was extremely unpopular in Alberta, with opposition reaching 70% according to some public opinion polls (Environics 1990). Nevertheless, the Premier never wavered in his support for the Accord and this cost him significant support on the party's right wing, despite having the support of both opposition parties. A 1992 incident provides testimony to the salience of Getty's support for the Meech Lake Accord. In preparation for the Charlottetown Accord negotiations, the Premier suddenly adopted a harder line. He announced a newfound opposition to official bilingualism and that any agreement would have to include Senate reform as a prerequisite for Alberta's support. The *Alberta Report*, an influential news publication among western Canadian conservatives, rewarded Getty with a front page story titled "Equality for all, favoritism for none – how Don Getty has united his caucus and his province" (Gunter 1992). Finally, in addition to the problems of retrenchment and constitutional compromise, the government had to contend with new, widespread concerns about ecological sustainability, which Premier Lougheed never faced. The most important of these issues was opposition to the government's plan to develop substantial pulp and paper mills in Northern Alberta. When Getty became Premier, he carried forward Lougheed's commitment to use the state to diversify the provincial economy. However, while Lougheed's government was more interested in developing industries closely related to

the oil and gas sector, such as the petrochemical sector, Getty settled – somewhat arbitrarily – on the fields of tourism, high technology and forestry development (Pratt and Urquhart 1994, 58).

In the latter field, the provincial government settled on a strategy of providing public assistance to large-scale pulp and paper mills owned by multinational forestry corporations.²⁷ However, the drive to develop such resources was complicated by its coincidence with the increased salience in environmental concerns in Canadian and Alberta politics. This was the age of concerns about the weakening of the ozone layer, nuclear power and acid rain. Alberta's environmental legislation, as it existed, was forged in the 1970s. As a result, the process for approving major industrial developments was poorly suited to handle the politics of increased demands for attention to environmental concerns and for public participation. One mill – owned by the Japanese conglomerate Daishowa – was approved in July 1988 following a public consultation process led by the company and approved by Alberta Environment. While the period of public consultation ostensibly lasted three months, in reality it consisted of 16 meetings with local governments, Métis leaders and members of the public spread over six days. “The brevity of the consultation exercise virtually assured insufficient time to organize a significant opposition to the mill proposal” (Pratt and Urquhart 1994, 104).

While the government escaped substantial political confrontation during that approval process, its attempts to approve the Alberta-Pacific (ALPAC) pulp and paper mill on the

²⁷ This account is based on Urquhart and Pratt's (1994) book-length examination of forestry policy under Premier Getty.

Athabasca River met with substantial opposition. In December 1988 Getty announced approval in principle for five large pulp and paper projects, the largest of which was the ALPAC mill on the Athabasca River. Final approval was conditional on the successful completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which was to be overseen by Alberta Environment and include public consultations. However, four factors combined to make this process much more controversial than the process that governed the approval of the Daishowa mill.

First, the ALPAC process occurred close to the 1989 election, making the government sensitive to public opinion in the area. The constituency in which the pulp mill was to be located was, at the time, represented by the NDP. Consequently, in its Throne Speech in February 1989 (just before the surprise election) the government announced it would revise the approval process for the ALPAC mill. It invited community leaders to nominate members of the EIA board and added a citizen review panel to provide additional comment. Second, the Minister of the Environment lost his seat in the 1989 election and was replaced by Ralph Klein, who had a long reputation as a populist politician and had made a career in Calgary's City Hall of making it more open to public participation. After becoming minister, Klein asked ALPAC to delay the EIA to give citizen groups more time to digest scientific information and gave some environmental groups public funds to hire their own experts. Moreover, he made suggested in public comments that if the panel declined to support the project, he would resist potential political pressure from the premier and risk a conflict. Third, in February 1989, the Federal Court of Appeal decided that Ottawa had a greater obligation to conduct

environmental assessments than previously thought. As a result, Ottawa began to take an interest in the ALPAC approval process. Fourth, and finally, the quick approval of the Daishowa mill convinced environmental groups to the need for mobilization. In March 1989, before the approval process began to get underway, the Friends of the North was organized to influence the process.

The ALPAC Environmental Impact Assessment board (EIA) began public hearings in October 1989 and was composed of four individuals nominated by Alberta Environment, two by the federal government and one by the Northwest Territories. Hearings concluded in December after 27 public meetings in 11 communities and 750 written submissions. When it issued its report, the panel declined to approve the project and recommended further scientific studies. However, Getty and the Forestry Minister were intent on getting approval for the project and appointed a panel of scientific experts to “review the review.” It appointed a forestry industry consulting firm to conduct this review but limited its mandate to the technological feasibility of the ALPAC project, as opposed to the environmental consequences, and committed to more research projects on the state of northern Alberta river systems. At the same time, ALPAC made slight revisions to its project to address some of the concerns raised in the review process. After this review of the review, the provincial government, including Klein as Minister of the Environment, finally approved the ALPAC mill in December 1990.

Pratt and Urquhart are unequivocal in their assessment of the consequences of the environmental opposition movement. According to them, the mobilization of opposition

to ALPAC signaled new concerns about massive industrialization and economic diversification and crystallized public concerns for participation in decision-making.

In 1989-90, ALPAC became the focus and emblem of a very effective, well-organized environmental opposition to the entire forestry and pulp mill strategy. ALPAC, indeed, transformed environmentalism in Alberta. To the horror of the cabinet and the disgust of ALPAC's joint venturers – Stuart Lang – complained that he was being forced 'to lower' himself to the level of public hearings – the big Athabasca / Lac La Biche pulp mill altered the political debate in Alberta between resource developers and preservationists. The experience of ALPAC forced a reluctant provincial government to change the regulatory framework for natural resource projects in order to avert further controversies. ALPAC changed Alberta's politics (1994, 158).

In conclusion, where Premier Lougheed had the fiscal capacity to build a province, Premier Getty had to deal with the consequences of high public expenditures and a collapse in natural resource revenues. The result was an austere policy of expenditure restraint and tax increases. However, optimistic budget projections and the fall-out from business failures supported by loan guarantees meant that Getty never profited politically from these measures. In a sense, the premier got the worst of both worlds, having to shoulder the blame for implementing unpopular austere fiscal policies without being able to claim any credit in making progress in addressing the deficit. Moreover, where Lougheed could make a reasonable case that he needed a strong mandate from the electorate in order to defend Alberta's interests in constitutional negotiations with a Liberal Prime Minister over energy revenues, this issue completely disappeared during Premier Getty's administration. In contrast, he was compelled to (or chose to) negotiate with a fellow Progressive Conservative Prime Minister in order to reconcile Quebec with

the rest of Canada. Finally, the rise of environmental issues created a dual tension for the provincial government. On the one hand, opposition to massive industrialization projects made it much more difficult to deal with the consequences of the 1986 collapse in oil prices. On the other hand, the rise of environmental concerns combined with opposition to the elite-centered approach to the Meech Lake Accord to generate more widespread concerns for participation in decision-making processes (Tupper, Pratt, and Urquhart 1992, 56). On the right wing of the political spectrum, the Alberta-based Reform Party capitalized on these sentiments in the aftermath of the 1989 election by emphasizing the need for greater mechanisms of direct democracy.²⁸

3.2 The Media Environment

The model of incentives and opportunities introduced in chapter one suggested two relevant variables have an impact on politicians' decisions to adopt public relations strategies: the relative influence of television and the independence and non-partisanship of the media. Relative national advertising expenditures on television and newspapers during Premier Getty's administration suggests that Canada, and by extension, Alberta, were comparatively television heavy (see figure B-4). In 1986, Canadian newspapers received 26% of national advertising expenditures while television received 18%. In Europe, however, the same proportions for the same year were approximately 40% and 20%. In 1992, at the end of Getty's term, Canadian newspapers and television attracted 25% and 23% of national advertising expenditures respectively. On average, that same

²⁸ Although the Reform Party was established to compete in federal elections, Harrison has shown that the party's rise was closely related to developments in the Alberta Progressive Conservative government (1995).

year European newspapers attracted approximately 38% of national advertising expenditures while television captured 27%.²⁹ This suggests that television became steadily more influential in the Canadian media market – and there is no particular reason why Alberta would be exceptional in this regard. One consequence of the increased influence of television was that daily newspapers changed their style of reporting. Instead of reporting government announcements for the following day’s newspapers, print journalists felt compelled to write the story from a different, analytical perspective and began leading news stories with opposition comment, which frustrated government officials. According to one public relations official from the time, “Under Getty, a news story would always lead with the criticism” (Interview 19). A print journalist from the time recalled this trend:

There was a trend at that time of starting to worry about television coverage. So something would happen at the Legislature, so we can’t just do the same angle that’s on broadcast every day, so the solution for a lot of us was to lead with the reaction and have the reaction as the main story. That would have been the last few Getty years from about 1989 to 1992. We worry about that even more now, but we don’t have such simplified solutions. Then it was, ‘we better lead with the reaction because broadcast already has the main story’ so Getty just got pounded by the opposition in the news stories (Interview 10).

At the same time, the major daily newspapers maintained their independent positions toward political parties, and there were no major changes in ownership or the structure of the major news media outlets in Alberta. Furthermore, the newspaper industry remained

²⁹ The Canadian data are drawn from The European data are drawn from a visual graph presented in the European Advertising and Media Forecast (World Advertising Research Center 2003). Raw data are not provided, making the reporting of exact percentages here impossible.

profitable in the 1980s, and this allowed newspapers to maintain relatively large presences in legislature bureaus.³⁰ In 1986 there were 38 members in the Legislature press gallery and in 1991 there were 32 (see Figure B-6). In short, compared with the Lougheed era, Premier Getty faced an independent, profitable press and an increasingly dominant television medium. According to the model introduced in chapter one, both tend to create a need for more aggressive and public relations strategies, which never materialized.

3.3 The Party System

In contexts of weak political parties – defined by a low voter turnout – combined with partisan competition or threats to reelection, politicians have strong incentives to influence public opinion through public relations. Although voter turnout was comparatively low under Premier Lougheed, he never faced credible threats to reelection. By contrast, Premier Getty had to deal with both. Turnout dropped by 12 percentage points in the 1986 election and remained low in the 1989 election.³¹ Moreover, he faced a genuinely competitive electoral context where the Progressive Conservatives could not count on easy re-election. The source of the drop in turnout is

³⁰ There are no data on the profitability of any specific newspapers. Annual reports of publicly traded publishing companies do give some data on the profitability of newspapers, but not by province. A research report from Statistics Canada suggests that, on the whole, the profitability of the Canadian newspaper industry is largely dependent on the general state of the wider economy. In times of economic growth, advertising revenues (the largest source of newspaper income in Canada) rises, while in recessions, this stagnates. Consequently, national newspaper revenues stalled during the recession of 1982-1983, growing one percent a year, then grew by 12% in 1984 when the economy recovered. Revenues grew steadily through the entire decade until the recession of 1989-1990. Then they dropped from approximately \$2.5 billion to approximately \$2.2 billion. Advertising revenues did not match 1990 levels until 1997 (Bone 2007).

³¹ See Elections Alberta reports for the 1986 and 1993 elections.

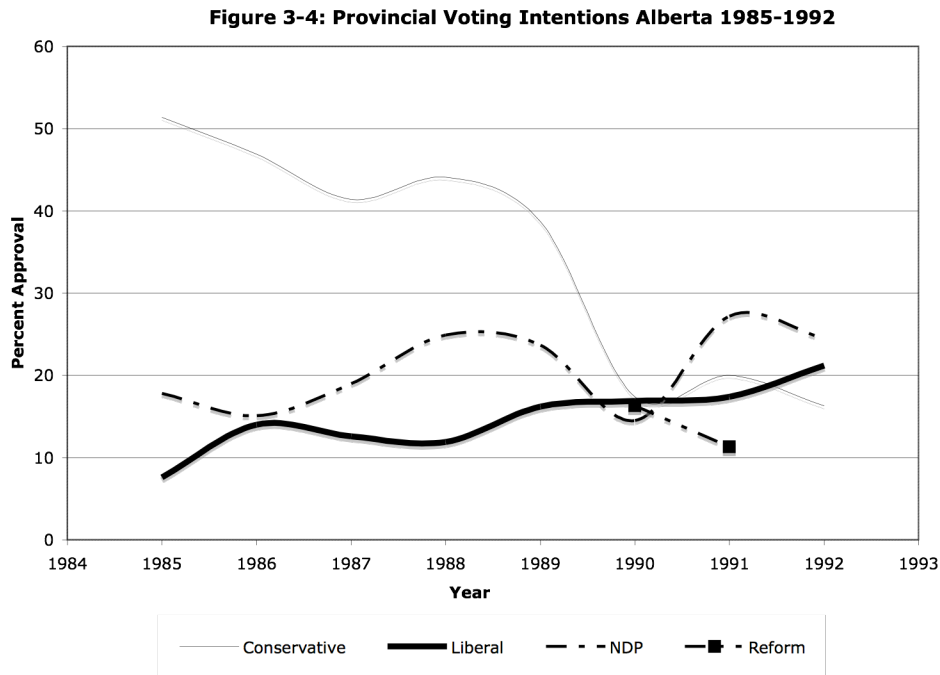
almost entirely attributable to widespread abstention by former Progressive Conservative voters. Although the party still won 51% of the vote, its absolute vote total dropped by 200 000 votes. By contrast the NDP and the Liberals slightly increased their absolute vote totals. The result of these dynamics was to establish a reduced legislative majority for the Progressive Conservatives and the largest opposition in Alberta since Social Credit formed the Official Opposition in 1971.

There is good evidence to suggest that the drop in support for the Progressive Conservatives can be attributed to internal party divisions and weaker leadership on behalf of Premier Getty. The 1985 leadership campaign was supposed to be an orderly transition to a hand picked successor but quickly became a divisive fight between the party establishment and grassroots activists. One of Getty's opponents was Julian Koziak, a member of Lougheed's cabinet with close ties to Alberta's Ukrainian community (Nikiforuk and Pratt 1987, 99). The other was Ron Ghitter, a Calgary lawyer who launched his campaign decrying the influence of the party establishment over the leadership selection process saying, "Fifty MLAs and a hundred government insiders must not have the power to hold in their hands the selection of the next premier of this province. That decision must be shared by the people of the party" (in Nikiforuk and Pratt 1987, 99). The divisions in the party were visible in the results of the leadership convention. Despite only facing two opponents, Getty was unable to win on the first ballot and only narrowly won on the second 1,061 votes to 867 for Koziak (Nikiforuk and Pratt 1987, 99-100).

The 1989 election results were far worse for the governing party. The PCs won the election again, but the Liberals made significant inroads, surpassing the NDP in their share of the popular vote share. Turnout increased from 47% to 54%, but these were almost entirely new voters supporting the Liberal Party. Both the PCs and the NDP kept their absolute vote totals stable, while the Liberals almost tripled their votes. PC support dropped below 50% for the first time since Premier Lougheed first defeated Social Credit. Nevertheless, the most disastrous election result was that Getty suffered a devastating loss in his own constituency in Edmonton, forcing him to ask a caucus member from rural Alberta to resign so that Getty could win a by-election. “His credibility was shattered. He was a wounded leader” (Interview 6). On April 8th, 1990, the *Edmonton Journal* reported that one rural constituency association pushed for a review of Getty’s leadership at the party’s convention, openly supported by one MLA. On February 15th, 1991, the *Calgary Herald* reported that Premier Getty publicly criticized his cabinet colleagues, demanding more loyalty. He was, in part, spurred by a cabinet minister releasing a public opinion survey showing public dissatisfaction with the premier’s leadership. The net effect of the 1989 election was to further cement a competitive party system, seriously weaken Premier Getty’s leadership and establish the Liberal Party, under Laurence Decore, the popular former mayor of Edmonton, as a potential political challenger to the governing party.

Public opinion polls registered the deep dissatisfaction with the Progressive Conservative government and the volatility of the electorate in the post-1989 environment (see Figure 3-4). Although Premier Getty inherited a popular regime in

1985, his government's popularity began to fall almost immediately after the 1986 election and reached dangerous depths after the 1989 election.

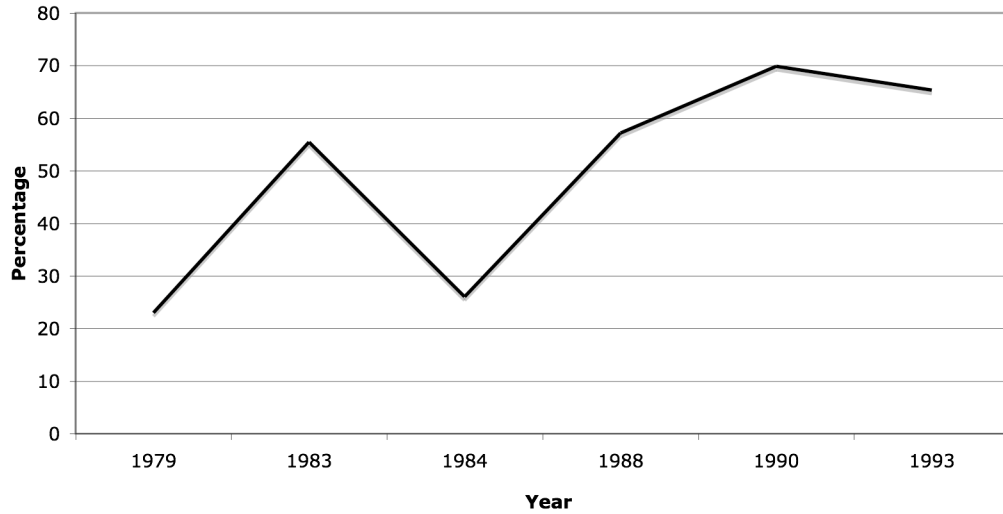


In particular, the rise of a non-existent provincial Reform party in public opinion polls is testimony to the volatility within the party system at the time. Although the Reform Party never did enter provincial politics, there were elements within the party that were tempted, and Preston Manning used the threat as a tool to influence Getty's policies. For example, when he convened a task force in 1990 to consider whether the party should enter provincial politics, the constitutional questions of Meech Lake and Senate reform were central to his demands for change in Getty's policies. "We believe that public interest in replacing the current government by something new will depend to a large extent on whether the provincial Progressive Conservative Party changes its leadership,

balances its budget, withdraws its support for Meech Lake, secures Stan Waters' immediate appointment to the Senate, and demonstrates new sensitivity to the environmental issue" (Vivone 1990).

Finally, the Alberta Progressive Conservatives were not the only party falling in popularity at this time; the idea that political parties in general were more than self-interested actors was coming under question. The widespread concerns about citizen alienation from the Meech Lake process created, in combination with the opposition to forestry development, a more general sense of hostility towards political parties. The Reform Party capitalized on these sentiments in the aftermath by emphasizing the need for greater mechanisms of direct democracy. Figure 3-5 displays the rise in anti-party sentiment in Alberta.

Figure 3-5: Anti-Party Sentiment in Alberta



Each year, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement:
Over the years, political parties have generally tried to look after the best interests of all Canadians, not just the interests of those who vote for them

— Percentage Disagreeing

Source: Clarke et al. (1982); Clarke and Kornberg (1983-1988); Clarke and Kornberg (1992); Clarke and Kornberg (1993)

In sum, from Premier Getty's first election, his leadership over the party was uncertain, he failed to mobilize significant elements of the party's base, the public opinion environment was uncertain, if not hostile, and he faced severe threats to his re-election, losing his own seat in 1989. All these aspects of the political environment suggest that Premier Getty had strong incentives to introduce more aggressive public relations tactics to shape public relations, and there were those within his government who made precisely this calculation. Ultimately, however, the reforms the premier did introduce were ineffective and poorly suited to the political environment of the day.

3.4 Government Public Relations Under Premier Getty

One of the defining characteristics of Premier Getty's government was its overwhelming continuity with the Lougheed government, despite operating in a very different political environment. Pal noted that Getty's decision-making processes were imported almost without change from Premier Lougheed, but that these processes – heavy dominance by core cabinet committees – worked well with a strong Premier facing a docile legislature and weak parties but that Getty had failed to adapt this to changed circumstances (1992, 22). The same could be said of Getty's approach to government public relations. The Public Affairs Bureau's budget stayed stable through Getty's administration (see Figure B-3); the two increases in that budget in 1987 and 1989 were for an Alberta exhibition at the Vancouver Expo and for an advertising campaign to support Alberta exports abroad (Alberta Treasury 1987, 1988). While government advertising expenditures increased substantially in the election years of 1986 and 1989 (see Figure B-1), the effect of these increases was minimal because the Getty government lacked the structures necessary to coordinate government public relations for political effect. Despite having a central agency nominally in charge of coordinating government public relations, the Getty government continued the Lougheed government's commitment to a distinct space for government public relations and departments maintained significant independence in pursuing their own public relations campaigns.

During Getty's first term, the Public Affairs Bureau was part of the Alberta Executive Council and administered by Minister of Advanced Education Dave Russell and Frank Calder as managing director. Both were long associates of Premier Lougheed; Calder

was a former political staff member who joined the civil service and Russell was one of the first MLAs elected with Lougheed in 1967. Similarly, the Getty government tended to reject the practice of intentionally leaking information to journalists, as did the Lougheed government. For example, a senior official in the Public Affairs Bureau under Premier Getty said: “During my time, to leak was not considered a conscious strategy it was a breach of public service ethics” (Interview 5). A communications official who worked in two departments under Premier Getty and under Premier Klein discussed the Getty government’s tight-fisted approach as regards information for journalists. “They [the Getty government] thought they could just starve the media, you didn’t give them anything” (Interview 8). A broadcast journalist recalled the same pattern.

You’d get them but they would be from sources you developed yourself. I don’t recall any major ones, but there were some. I had a couple but they were from sources I had developed. Getty didn’t do that much, for whatever reason it wasn’t part of their bag of tricks (Interview 4).

Also, a distinct space for political and civil service communications characterized the Getty government as it did the Lougheed government. For example, reflecting the commitment of the Lougheed era to autonomy and limited interference by politicians, one public relations official described the relationship between Russell and the PAB as a very “hands-off” relationship, with meetings between the minister and the managing director every two months (Interview 5). At the same time, the premier continued the practice of hiring former journalists as press secretaries and then rewarding them with

political patronage positions.³² Similarly, the position of director of communications – the key public relations position within government – maintained its civil service character as these staff remained with their departments whenever ministers changed portfolios (see table 3).

Table 3: Relations Between Directors of Communication and Ministers 1986-1992	
Departmental moves	18
Ministerial moves	0
<p><i>“Departmental moves” are defined as instances where a departmental Director of Communication retained his or her position when a Minister changed portfolios. “Ministerial move” are defined as instances where a departmental Director of Communication moved with the respective minister to a new portfolio</i></p> <p><i>Source: Data are compiled by the author from Alberta government telephone directories (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1986-2005)</i></p>	

Moreover, although the central agency had a mandate to coordinate government communications, this coordination was in support of departmental activities, and not one of control. A consultant’s report from 1988 on the organization of the Public Affairs Bureau noted this role as a supporting, coordinating agency: “The Bureau ... appears to be evolving around a ‘franchising’ model, with the departmental communications units operating as stand-alone functions, with little regular requirement for coordination and control, beyond what could be supplied by able group (portfolio) directors³³ and by the

³² From 1986 to 1989 Getty’s press secretary was former television journalist Geoff Davey. He was subsequently appointed to a patronage position as Alberta’s trade representative in London. His replacement was Hugh Dunne, a former television producer with a Calgary television station (Interview 4). He was later appointed by Ralph Klein to be the director of the Premier’s Southern Alberta Office.

³³ Portfolio directors were employed by the central agency and supervised public relations staff in a group of departments with related responsibilities. Departments were organized into economic and social affairs portfolios.

Managing Director” (William M. Mercer Ltd. 1988, 6). Budgets for the Public Affairs Bureau reflect this status as a full-service communications agency that provided services to individual departments. Throughout Premier Getty’s administration, the budget was dedicated primarily to technical and creative services although there was a slow rise in public relations staff seconded to departments (see Figure B-2).

Getty’s government deviated from Lougheed’s in one respect: where Lougheed had developed an extremely distant relationship with the press, Getty initially promised more access and a congenial relationship with journalists in the Legislative press gallery. One broadcast reporter recalled: “His relationship with the media was remarkable. We were scrumming him 2 or 3 times a day. We couldn’t get enough of him and he was cheerful” (Interview 3). However, this open relationship between government and the journalists in the legislature press gallery quickly deteriorated; there were signs of hostility as early as 1988. At that year’s Progressive Conservative convention, just two years after being elected leader, Getty attacked the media in a closed-door session of party delegates. “If some jerk with a television camera comes to my house on Sunday morning ... he’s not going to get an interview. He’s lucky he didn’t get a kick in the ass right off my porch” (Getty quoted in Geddes and Kerr 1988).

There were many sources of the conflict between journalists and Premier Getty. Part of Getty’s difficulties derived from his personal awkwardness. For example, in 1986, he answered a question from a journalist about the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster by saying that it could potentially be good for Alberta tourism, generating an extremely negative reaction at his insensitivity (Nikiforuk and Pratt 1987, 109). “I was in

that scam and he actually thought about answering this question. Somebody more skillful would have said 'it's a terrible tragedy and we're not going to talk about it', but he said 'it might be good for tourism in Alberta,'" recalled a print journalist (Interview 2). In 1987, when a provincial financial institution was collapsing, journalists discovered the Premier playing golf after his Press Office had told them that he had been working outside the office. The news media quickly framed the discovery as an instance of Getty's insensitivity, laziness and detachment from important issues (Nikiforuk and Pratt 1987, 212).

Part of his problems also stemmed from his inability to adjust to the more aggressive and independent journalism that had developed since he left politics in 1979. "He wasn't prepared for how things had changed. Both as a football player and in the early days of the Lougheed government, he was used to a much more deferential press and those things had changed" (Interview 4). Another source of his difficulties may have stemmed from poor advice. One broadcast journalist noted that part of Getty's difficulties with the media stemmed from his advisors. "He had bad media advice, in some cases, Geoff Davey and Hugh Dunne, were not particularly good. He had media people in his press office, and I really think they don't always make the best communications staff" (Interview 4).³⁴ In one infamous incident, the press office instructed journalists not to photograph the rear of the premier's head, for fear of publicizing his thinning hair. This,

³⁴ See page 100 for brief professional biographical information about Premier Getty's press secretaries.

of course, only encouraged journalists who subsequently made a point of trying to get just such a picture (Interview 4).

Although the relationship between the news media and the premier was cold prior to the 1989 election, afterward election the relationship only worsened. The results of the 1989 election represented a severe shock to the government as the premier won a reduced majority but lost his own seat. One result of the electoral shock was to create immediate pressure to reform how the government should communicate. Two separate memos recommended two very different approaches to the situation. First, a memo dated June 2nd, 1989 argued that the source of the conflict lay with the excessively aggressive, confrontational and abusive attitude by the news media toward the premier.

In the 1989 election campaign, relations between the two [the press and the government] took one of their periodic dips. The basic reason for this can be traced to the Press Gallery's reluctance to acknowledge the Premier's right to determine when he wanted to participate in interviews and scrums. When the Premier declined to participate, Press Gallery responses ranged from verbal harangues to blocking the Premier physically (Alberta Executive Council. Office of the Premier. 1989*a*, 1).³⁵

The solution, in this author's eyes, was to minimize access to the premier. The recommendations had distinct echoes of how Premier Lougheed dealt with the news media. The author recommended physically barring the news media from the area outside the Premier's Office, having the premier refuse to give answers to the media while he walked to and from offices in the legislature; increase news conferences to

³⁵ According to a handwritten note on the front of this memo, Getty passed this to his press secretary for his consideration.

replace the uncomfortable scrums; and increase the briefings made by the press secretary for reporters (Alberta Executive Council. Office of the Premier. 1989a, 3).

A second memo, from an Edmonton campaign official and dated June 6th, 1989, argued for a different reaction. This official argued that the government needed to acknowledge the legitimate role for the news media and to work with them, providing them with information and access.

Our dealings with the media, particularly in Edmonton, must be entirely revamped. We are losing our ability to get our message across, *and are in danger of developing a siege mentality* – not a good position for government to be in. The media is always going to be around, and, like it or not, they have a power far out of proportion to their numbers or intelligence. Ways must be found to use the media to our advantage. While the majority of the media may tend to be left of centre in the political spectrum, it does not make them our enemy. *Information is a key part of our dealings with the media, and we should be giving the media as much information as we can, particularly on the contentious issues* (Alberta Executive Council. Office of the Premier. 1989b, 3, emphasis mine).³⁶

At the same time this official recommended creating a new, political relationship with the Public Affairs Bureau.

Although the Bureau has, in the past, seen itself as ‘non-political,’ I think it is time to re-examine its role in light of our current problems with the media. Certainly, the experts exist within the Bureau to be of assistance in defining our media strategy. I suspect there will be considerable resistance to any attempt to ‘politicize’ the Bureau, but at least the relationship of the Bureau with the government should be re-examined (Alberta Executive Council. Office of the Premier. 1989b, 3)

³⁶ This memo is typewritten and has a handwritten cover sheet attached to the front, signed “Patrick” and faxed to the Premier’s home, suggesting a degree of familiarity between the writer and the Premier.

The Getty government chose the former course of minimizing access to the media and rejected the latter course of politicizing the Public Affairs Bureau and acknowledging the legitimate role for the news media. The Premier's Office was walled off in 1989, just as the first report suggested, earning the press gallery's scorn and the nickname, "Fort Getty" (Vivone 1989, 3). One journalist argued it was symbolic of Getty's detachment from his own party and the broader electorate. "That wall isn't just for reporters. It's part of the Premier's much larger problem with his party and the whole province" (Braid 1989). Other avenues for journalists to speak to the premier were also cut off. A radio reporter from the era recalled the gradual restriction of access:

After 1989, things went to hell and we would get him occasionally but it was only on formal news conferences or these rolling scrums, these monstrous, rolling scrums where he was running from the cameras. That's why they shut off the Confederation Room in order to shorten the walk from his office to the chamber and we'd have the running of the bulls.³⁷ He'd come plowing through and we'd go chasing after him and it got really bad (Interview 4).

Getty did make one change in regards to the relationship with the Public Affairs Bureau. In the interests of creating a greater degree of coordination, a cabinet communications committee was set up, chaired by Economic Development Minister Peter Elzinga and vice-chaired by the Minister for Public Works, Supply and Services and the Public Affairs Bureau, Ken Kowalski. The committee's mandate was three-fold. First, it was to make recommendations to cabinet for a long-term strategic communications plan with specific themes and objectives; second, to assist in the

³⁷ The Confederation Room is on the third floor of the legislature building between the Premiers Office and the chamber. Previously journalists and MLAs had used it for interviews following Question Period.

coordination, timing and content of all public communication campaigns conducted by the departments; third, to ensure all advertising and public relations campaigns were properly evaluated (Alberta Executive Council 1990).

However, two factors limited the committee's effectiveness. First, the members of the committee were peripheral in cabinet. The only influential cabinet ministers on the committee were Economic Development Minister Peter Elzinga, Public Works Minister Ken Kowalski, and Health Minister Nancy Betkowski; all three served on Treasury Board and on the Priorities, Agenda and Finance committees. Second, Getty enforced a strict policy allowing cabinet committees only to make recommendations; cabinet committees had no authority to enforce their decisions and recommendations. In 1991, a memo from the Deputy Minister of Executive Council to the Premier also emphasized the cabinet committee's weakness: "The [Cabinet Communications] Committee hasn't been particularly effective, due in part to poor attendance and lack of clout" (Mellon 1991b).³⁸

Nevertheless, the committee immediately began diagnosing the government's problems and recommending solutions. For example, the Managing Director of the Public Affairs Bureau identified two problems facing the government in its public relations. First, there was a gap between the Public Affairs Bureau, the Premier's Press Office and departmental Directors of Communication. "The Public Affairs Bureau is not directly involved in discussions of major communications initiatives and plans in the cabinet

³⁸ Klein himself bemoaned the cabinet committees' minimal influence. "Cabinet had, to some degree, decision-making powers, but usually to rubber stamp the decisions coming out of agenda and priorities. The committees of cabinet didn't have any power to make recommendations. They were set up to hear submissions, take a decision from cabinet and see if it could be refined, but the decision was already made (Klein quoted in Martin 2002, 99)."

communications committee or with the Premier's Office and Executive Council" (Bateman 1989, 7). Second, the Public Affairs Bureau lacked influence within the government because its only sources of authority were the original, vaguely-worded 1973 Order-in-Council and the 1975 Treasury Board minute giving it approval over certain capital expenditures by departments.

As solutions, the report recommended increasing the Public Affairs Bureau's influence with line departments by giving it statutory authority, similar to the legislation that established the Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs. The legislation that established that department defined it as a central agency and gave it legislative, as opposed to simply regulatory, authority to coordinate the relations that line departments entered into with other governments (Watts 1997, 73-75). That act required the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to approve any and all intergovernmental agreements. At the same time, the report recommended requiring departmental directors of communication to sit on their respective executive committees.

Very little came of these suggestions. The cabinet issued a requirement that departmental directors of communication sit on their executive committees and the Managing Director of the Public Affairs Bureau was appointed to sit on the cabinet communications committee in the interests of greater internal coordination (Ingram 1989). However, interview evidence suggests that the decision to require directors of communication to sit on departmental executive committees was never implemented despite formal cabinet direction (Interview 6). Similarly, the PAB received no increased administrative authority and despite having the director of the Public Affairs Bureau sit

on the cabinet communications committee, this committee was always hampered by its peripheral membership and the policy preventing committees from making binding decisions.

Three incidents reveal how ineffective the cabinet committee was. First, in February 1990, just three months after the cabinet committee was debating the questions detailed above, Getty directed some separate, political staff to form a media relations committee to put the government's case forward in public. The chair of the group described the committee as follows:

The committee sees its role as promoting our political agenda as well as defending it. To that end we think the prime message we should be promoting is Progressive Conservative leadership. Therefore all responses to criticism must attack and promote it actively. A combination of individual letters, prepared by the committee, signed by our volunteers will be sent to newspapers as well as certain letters we will blanket the province with utilizing our word processing capability. We also want to monitor ministers' speeches, MLAs speeches and their weekly columns to assure that the right leadership is being conveyed. This committee will also begin preparing a weekly newspaper draft for use by you (Young 2).

Strictly political and partisan staff dominated the committee. Two of the group's members named in the memo were employees of the government caucus research office and one was a staff member of the Progressive Conservative party. The committee's tasks were certainly partisan; it planned to mobilize supporters to phone in to radio talk shows to ensure a Progressive Conservative presence. That the memo failed to make any reference to the recent changes suggested by the Public Affairs Bureau and the cabinet communications committee is telling. Either Getty felt, on principle, that the tasks he had set for this political communications group were not appropriate for civil service public

relations staff or he was not aware of the changes that were being adopted by the cabinet communications committee. Either interpretation speaks of a significant gap between the public relations bureaucracy and the Premier's Office. Precisely this problem had been identified by the Managing Director of the public Affairs Bureau in her memo to the cabinet communications committee where she argued for increased authority for the PAB (Bateman 1989, 7).

Second, the cabinet communications committee had a limited ability to control departmental advertising campaigns. Advertising expenditures increased substantially during Getty's first term (see Figure B-1) and the two largest increases in government-wide advertising expenditures occurred in the election years of 1986 and 1989. However, despite spending more on advertising, the Getty government was steadily losing popular support. Therefore, in 1991, the cabinet communications committee attempted to get some central control over departmental activities and required all advertising campaigns to be brought forward to the cabinet communications committee (Steiner 1991).

Unfortunately, it remained ambiguous whether or not this meant the cabinet committee could actually veto departmental advertising campaigns or just make recommendations. For instance, when the Forestry Minister presented the committee a proposal for a \$200,000 advertising campaign about forest fire prevention in September 1991, the committee tried to get the minister to revise the campaign. The Forestry Minister refused, and the committee had to turn to the Premier to resolve the conflict (Elzinga 1991). In a memo to the premier, the Deputy Minister of Executive Council pointed out

the limited powers of the communications committee, arguing that they needed to be strengthened.

I think you should raise this issue at cabinet and give the committee the authority or clout to make decisions that are binding. Otherwise, it's just a debating society, with ministers or senior bureaucrats doing whatever they want with their communications funding. The amount of money we have for communications programs is diminishing. We have to spend what we have wisely, on issues that have a real priority. I'm not convinced we're doing that under the present system (Mellon 1991a).

Getty rejected the suggestion in a written note: “no cabinet committees make binding recommendations on ministers’ responsibilities” (Getty in Mellon 1991a). Instead, to resolve the issue, Getty ordered a meeting with the two ministers.

Third, the cabinet communications committee rejected some suggestions from within the government public relations bureaucracy to launch cross-government public relations campaigns to improve the government’s political standing. For example, in 1989, a committee of public relations staff within the PAB presented a proposal to the new minister, Ken Kowalski, for a campaign about environmental issues.³⁹ The Canadian political context at the time was marked by tremendous public interest in environmental issues, and Alberta was no different. The government was facing significant public protest over the environmental impact over its support of large pulp-and-paper projects in

³⁹ Kowalski was – and is – one of the more colourful politicians in Alberta history. He was first elected in 1979, entered cabinet in 1986, made a close alliance with Ralph Klein in the 1992 leadership race and was subsequently named one of his two deputy premiers. Throughout his career, Kowalski had a remarkable desire and ability to dole out patronage, particularly for his riding. “...Kowalski had gained a reputation in the 1980s as the minister of plaque-unveilings and ribbon-cuttings. He roamed the province to open government projects in his various capacities as public works or transportation minister, or as what was quietly building into the jackpot for a politician who loved the glory of handouts, lotteries minister (Martin 2002, 99).”

Northern Alberta (Tupper, Pratt, and Urquhart 1992, 46-49). The report identified the widespread public concern over the environment and the public's disapproval of how the Getty government had been dealing with the issue, quoting public opinion data to that effect (Environment Communications Committee of the Public Affairs Bureau 1989, 5). "In such circumstances, the public looks to government for leadership and clear evidence that it is 'doing something' about these problems" (5). Subsequently, the committee's report was critical that the communications efforts on the issue of the environment had been fragmented and lacked coordination. Ministries that touched on environmental issues – for example, energy, forestry and economic development – invariably focused their efforts on the issues related to economic development rather than on ecological sustainability. If, on the other hand, support could be won within government for a public relations campaign, managed by the Public Affairs Bureau, the situation might be improved. Crucially, the report argued that improving the government's position vis-à-vis opposition parties and environmental interest groups would not necessarily require a shift in policies.

Oftentimes, it is not so much new policies or programs which lead to effective positioning, but proper packaging and promotion of existing programs and initiatives. An excellent example is Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars. Much of the research and development into space-based weapons and defensive systems already existed prior to Reagan's pronouncement of his policy – but by assembling existing programs under the new umbrella, giving it a name and adding a few new wrinkles, the then-President was able to effectively position himself and his administration in his desired 'leadership' and 'get tough' roles. Through a coordinated and proactive communications strategy, the Alberta Government also can effectively communicate its current policies and practices; its proposed initiatives; its willingness to provide leadership on global environmental issues; and its position that economic expansion and diversification do not necessarily mean environmental degradation (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau. Environment Communications Committee 1989, 7).

The report called for a government-wide, integrated public relations campaign on environmental issues, led by the Public Affairs Bureau. But, as the report noted at the end, there were no central resources for such an initiative (1989, 10). This was yet another instance of the problems posed by having a central agency nominally charged with co-coordinating government communications but lacking the authority and resources to do so. The PAB's budget was composed almost entirely of salaries for public relations staff seconded to individual departments or services charged with overseeing the contract tendering process and providing efficient creative and technical services to departments. Departments, on the other hand, controlled the bulk of communications budgets.

Kowalski, as the responsible minister, took the proposal for a public relations campaign on the environment to the cabinet communications committee. He made a direct link to the unstable and fluid public opinion of the time to justify the campaign:

The environment in which this government must communicate is complex and changing. Factors include:

- the political landscape is not as stable as it was;
- as we are poised to communicate confidence in the future, we are leaving a period rife with the perception of spending (election commitments, the Code settlement⁴⁰, recent salary increases, the costs of loan defaults) and entering a period where some strong measures of restraint must be taken;
- our energies have been directed at managing a succession of difficult communications situations rather than aggressively articulating our own vision or agenda.
- an argument could be made that we are doing a better job of carrying a message of confidence and opportunity outside Alberta than we are inside
- we are dealing with an increasingly cynical public
- Recent studies tell us clearly that the public is overloaded with fractured messages from government and don't know how to get basic, useful information from the bureaucracy.
- The picture within government shows a very broad range of departmental communications but little or no corporate, government-wide strategies to coordinate and deliver messages (Kowalski 1989, 1).

To fund the campaign, Kowalski requested that the cabinet communications committee approve shifting 10% of each department's communications budget to a central fund administered by the committee and the Public Affairs Bureau. Reaction at the committee was hostile. Internal correspondence from Treasury Department civil servants reveals that the committee chairman, Peter Elzinga, and Health Minister Nancy Betkowski both

⁴⁰ The Code settlement was the agreement reached between the government and investors in the failed Principal Group, a provincial financial institution that went bankrupt in 1987.

expressly rejected central control of departmental communications budgets (Alberta Treasury 1990).

Such a campaign is an archetypal example of the philosophy underpinning public relations activities as defined in chapter one; namely, the professional manipulation of image in the pursuit of organizational interests. Rather than taking publicly expressed concerns seriously and responding to them, staff within the Public Affairs Bureau were proposing to their superiors a campaign to convince the public that the government was “doing something,” without changing its policies. However, the limited influence of the central agency meant that nothing came of the campaign.

It met its end when the original report found its way to a journalist, resulting in a news story in the *Edmonton Journal* quoting Liberal leader Laurence Decore who called it a “Goebbels-type approach that casts a dark shadow over the honesty of the Conservative government’s entire operation” (Laghi 1989). The Minister of the Environment, Ralph Klein, responded in the news story on behalf of the government. Arguably, his response foreshadowed future trends in government public relations, as he argued that a campaign on the environment was urgently needed because the environment was a “very, very hot issue” (Laghi 1989).

Kowalski tried to address the problem of the Public Affairs Bureau’s limited authority and financial resources once more the following year. In 1991, he returned to the communications committee, again requesting that departments hand over 10% of their

individual communications budgets to be managed by the Public Affairs Bureau and the cabinet communications committee. Again, the committee was not convinced.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the recommendation of the Minister responsible for the Bureau that a fund be created by pooling 10% of each departmental communication budget that would be used specifically by the communications cabinet committee to meet the communications priorities of the government as a whole. It was felt that while some departments could easily contribute 10%, utilizing an across-the-board formula could severely restrict the smaller departments and make them totally ineffective. The committee accepted the Minister's report as information only (Ingram 1990).

After two failed attempts to gain more authority and resources for the Public Affairs Bureau, Kowalski gave up. He privately requested that the premier relieve him of the responsibility for the PAB and Alberta Public Safety Services but make him responsible for the Alberta Gaming and Racing Commissions.

I have many reasons for the above requests and would be most pleased to discuss with you. At the same time, I really believe that we have some very exciting possibilities in the overall area of 'gaming' and believe that it would be in the best interest of the Government if the Minister Responsible for Lotteries, Major Exhibitions and Fairs was also responsible for the Alberta Gaming Commission and the Alberta Racing Commission (Kowalski 1990).

Two months later, Kowalski publicized his desire to change portfolios public in a news story in the *Edmonton Journal* dated February 5th, 1991. At that time, however, he made no mention of his private request to the Premier that he trade portfolios, only that he wished for less work. His public justification was very different from his private communication. "I'm tired. I've got five departments that I'm looking after ... It's a little much for one guy," he said. Given Kowalski's reputation for ambition and the fact

that he requested new portfolios to replace the ones he was seeking to lose, this is hardly plausible. In March, the Premier acceded to his request, relieved Kowalski of the Public Affairs Bureau, assigned him the Gaming and Racing Commissions and named former television broadcaster and Culture Minister Doug Main as the Minister responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau.⁴¹ Given Kowalski's record as the minister responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau from 1989 and 1990 and given his well-documented ambition, his desire to get rid of the PAB illuminates its weak standing relative to line departments and within the government as a whole. In two years, he had twice tried to gain more influence over departmental communications budgets and failed both times. The PAB's only major resource was its staff and, yet, a simple directive from cabinet that directors of communications be assigned to sit on departmental executive committees was never enforced. Instead, this ambitious and political minister traded in a weak public relations agency for the cash cows of racing and gaming, particularly video lottery terminals.

The provincial government did pursue one advertising campaign in this period. In the wake of the 1991 budget, which the government initially claimed was balanced, the government launched an advertising campaign promoting the balanced budget and Alberta's relatively strong economy. The campaign consisted of television and newspaper advertisements and a half-hour program on the province's provincially owned

⁴¹ Perhaps not coincidentally, six days after being assigned responsibility for the Alberta Gaming Commission, Kowalski announced that the government would launch a pilot project for video lottery terminals later that summer. Those gaming machines ultimately ballooned into a significant source of revenue for the government, generating hundreds of millions of dollars, providing Kowalski far more influence than the Public Affairs Bureau could ever provide.

television network, produced by the Department of Economic Development and Trade.⁴²

This campaign quickly attracted the Official Opposition's attention.

Over the last three days and continuing even today, Albertans were also subjected to a taxpayer-funded media campaign of television, radio, and print ads to sell this budget fantasy. Now, a confident lot this bunch is; they're so nervous that Albertans won't believe them that in desperation they've taken to selling this budget like some new and improved detergent, only this one won't wash. My question to the Deputy Premier is this: why did the government find it necessary to waste the taxpayers' money on this media blitz? Was it because Albertans didn't believe them budget day?" (Martin 1991).

Also predictably, the government defended its actions in the interests of informing the population.

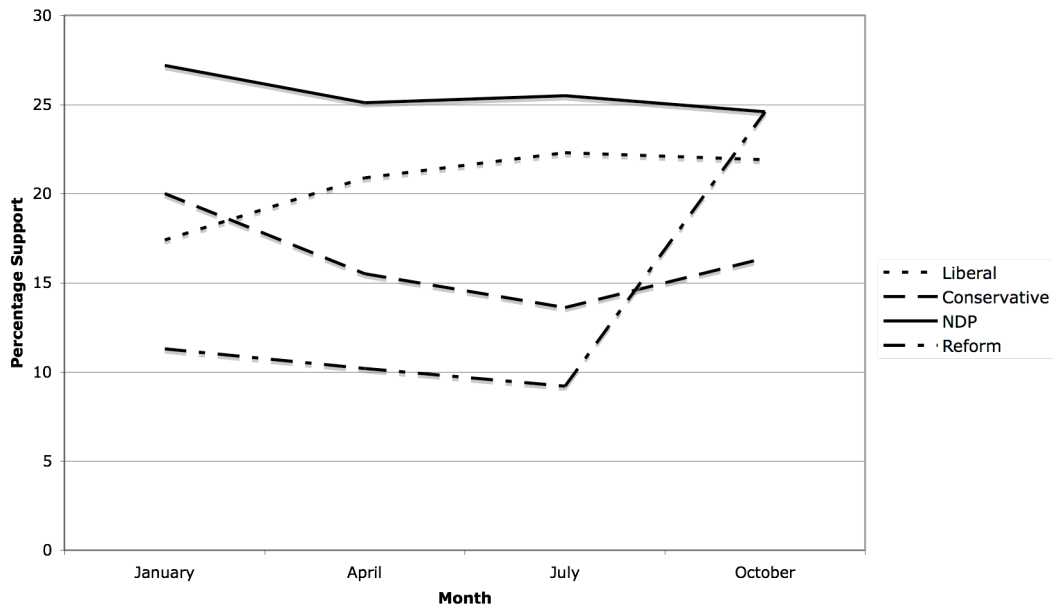
It's clear that it's incumbent on the government to inform its citizens as to what its policies are. In order to do so, we've chosen to distribute as widely as possible the facts regarding Alberta's strong economy and its fiscal integrity and its fiscal plan. I make no apologies whatsoever for taking every possible step to let Albertans know the truth (Horsman 1991).

However, the campaign failed utterly to improve the government's standing. The campaign took place in April, but for the rest of 1991, the government's popularity

⁴² The Minister of Economic Development of Trade was Peter Elzinga, also the chair of the cabinet communications committee.

continued to decline (see Figure 3-6).

Figure 3-6: Provincial Voting Intention 1991



Source: Environics Focus Canada

Thus, when the cabinet met at its annual retreat in October 1991, it was facing a substantial political crisis. By this time, it had become clear that the balanced budget was a myth.⁴³ The difficult public opinion environment was reflected in the provincial government's first benchmark public opinion survey, presented at the retreat.⁴⁴ For

⁴³ The government was forced to concede that the budget could not be balanced that year because its estimates of the price of natural gas were too high. It admitted this three weeks after the October cabinet retreat.

⁴⁴ Previously, departments conducted the bulk of the government's public opinion research while the Progressive Conservative party commissioned an annual party poll. The Public Affairs Bureau was restricted to issue-specific public opinion research and subscriptions to nation-wide surveys such as Environics Focus Quarterly. By 1990, however, the PAB convinced the cabinet that the center of government needed its own public opinion research. The result was the benchmark study presented to the cabinet at its 1991 retreat.

example, one closed-ended question asked respondents to identify what the government's highest priority should be. The respondents were deeply divided (see Table 4)

Table 4: Highest Priority For Government of Alberta According To Survey Respondents

Balance Budget	29%
Maintain Health / Social Programs	26%
Diversify Economy	19%
Protect the Environment	17%
Define Alberta's Role in Canada	6%

Source: Heffring and Adams (1991b). Question asked respondents to identify what the highest priority for the Government of Alberta should be.

The survey summarized the divisions within Alberta public opinion as follows:

Generally, Albertans are struggling with an 'economic catch 22' both at the personal level and at the provincial/political level. They are concerned about being fiscally responsible but they do not want to accept a lower standard of living or see a reduction in services offered. Albertans have not yet debated the questions of making choices and accepting tradeoffs (Heffring and Adams 1991a, 6).

Furthermore, the report noted that,

while Albertans strongly disapprove of deficits they DON'T want to cut back in services, in fact they want to spend more on education, training and the environment. Their 'solution' is still one of creating more revenue or being more efficient rather than cutting back on services (Heffring and Adams 1991a, 8).

The theme of government communication figured largely in the public opinion data presented to the cabinet. The report identified a strong sense of alienation from the political process within the population. One closed-ended question asked respondents whether the government should dedicate more, less or the same emphasis to a series of political issues. “Consulting with Albertans” received the greatest proportion of “more emphasis” responses – 84% (Heffring and Adams 1991b, 14). Similarly, 87% of respondents agreed with the statement that “ordinary people should be more involved in decision-making” (Heffring and Adams 1991b, 16). The summary also stressed that the government’s advertising campaign related to the 1991 budget had failed. The poll’s summary was blunt on this point: “The ‘balanced budget’ message is either not getting out or it isn’t being believed” (Heffring and Adams 1991b, 8).

The results of the public opinion survey had a direct impact on the premier and the cabinet. Getty quickly announced the formation of four new cabinet task forces to study budget cutbacks, legislative reforms, internal government reforms and government communications. A handwritten description of these committees reveals the survey’s influence. For example, the mandate of the communications task force was “to develop more effective communications policies and mechanisms in line with the findings of the omnibus survey, review the Public Affairs Bureau, polling, technology, ACCESS and CKUA, issue management, plebiscites and referenda” (Mellon 1991b). The legislative reform committee was to examine “innovative changes such as voting procedures, question period, the election of the Speaker, committee structures, legislative strategy and related matters, including the potential for a more direct interface with the general public”

(Mellon 1991*b*). The committee on internal government procedures was to “review cabinet procedures, cabinet committees and caucus structures and alternative decision-making processes to examine mechanisms for more efficient consultation with the general public and interest groups” (Mellon 1991*b*).

The task force on government communications considered a wide range of changes from the mundane (increasing the use of voice mail by government staff) to the more innovative (making use of the provincially owned television and radio networks to support electronic town halls). Much of the discussion also again revolved around the role and the structure of the Public Affairs Bureau, including the enduring question of the relationship between a central agency and individual line departments. That committee’s subsequent report identified three criticisms that had been levied at the PAB. It noted, for example, that the Bureau had been criticized in the past for not having a high enough level of political sensitivity, for being too bureaucratic and reactive and that some departments had openly questioned the value of having departmental communications staff reporting to a separate central agency. On the other hand, the task force argued that the central agency’s position was hampered by a series of constraints. “The Bureau operates from a position of weakness rather than strength. Its mandate is felt to be weak and eroding. Constant evaluation of its role contributes to the growing perception of its weakness” (Alberta Executive Council. Communications Task Force. 1991, 1). The lack of strength and mandate meant that the Bureau spent too much time managing breakdowns and crises. “Without a stronger mandate and commitment by government,

these breakdowns will continue” (Alberta Executive Council. Communications Task Force. 1991a, 1).

To address the situation, the task force argued for a much stronger role for the cabinet communications committee, providing it with access to its own budget and strengthened terms of reference that would have allowed it to enforce its own decisions against the wishes of individual departments” (Alberta Executive Council. Communications Task Force 1991b). The report also recommended strengthening the Public Affairs Bureau’s central strategic and political capacity and to minimize its regulatory and bureaucratic roles in overseeing contract tendering processes and managing the Queen’s Printer (Alberta Executive Council 1991, 4).

These task forces had some effect. For example, the communications task force recommended repeating the omnibus survey on a quarterly basis and this practice was adopted. In response to the recommendation for a greater strategic and political capacity for the Public Affairs Bureau, a new division was established with five full-time employees dedicated to writing, issue analysis and media relations (Alberta. Legislative Assembly of Alberta 1992). Similarly, reflecting the desire to minimize the organization’s bureaucratic and administrative character, it privatized photography and photo laboratory services, delegated the authority to purchase specialty equipment to Public Works and reduced the capacity of its exhibits unit to support departmental trade show displays (Steiner 1992). Other recommendations, such as the question of electing the Speaker, were incorporated in the leadership campaigns to replace Getty. Both Klein and Betkowski promised an elected Speaker, for example, while both Klein and the third-

place candidate, Rick Orman promised an increased role for public consultation (Betkowski 1992; Orman 1992).

3.5 Conclusion

Premier Getty failed to adopt public relations practices despite having far greater incentives to do so. He could not count on continuing conflict with an external enemy to unite the electorate behind him, nor could he count on the fiscal capacity that Lougheed enjoyed. At the same time, the rise in environmental concerns created much greater public opposition to industrial development and combined with concerns about the elite-dominated Meech Lake Accord process to create a widespread demand for increased citizen participation. Similarly, in the latter days of Premier Lougheed's government, the news media had developed a more independent, non-partisan and even confrontational attitude. Finally, Premier Lougheed never seriously faced threats to his reelection, but Getty did, almost immediately on becoming Premier. After the 1986 election, he faced the largest opposition caucus since 1971 (the NDP had 16 seats) and the largest third party in the history of the province (the Liberals won 4 seats). This only got worse in 1989 when Getty lost his own seat, the PCs dropped below 50% of electoral support and the Liberals doubled their seat count to eight, winning 29% of the vote.

The model introduced in chapter one suggests that in such an environment, politicians have strong incentives to manipulate public opinion using public relations strategies (see Table 5).

Table 5: Model of Incentives and Opportunities Under Premier Getty

Condition	Measure	Hypothesized Relationship To Strategic Interventions Via Public Relations	Evidence
Institutional Configuration			
Type of Democracy	Majoritarian or Consensus-Based	In majoritarian systems, heads of government must accept blame and take credit by virtue of their place at the head of a unified government, requiring public relations strategies to manage these public perceptions.	-Strongly personalized approach to politics; strong control by premier of policy process
Party System	Party Strength (Turnout)	As turnout declines, governments become less secure about having a reliable electoral base which will support them, requiring public relations strategies to maintain electoral support.	-low turnout strongly jeopardized the government's reelection chances in both 1986 and 1989
	Level of Competition	As electoral defeat becomes increasingly possible, politicians can no longer discount public opinion to pursue their policy objectives and require public relations strategies to accomplish policy goals and secure reelection.	-high level of partisan competition, 1989 byelection defeat was a severe shock to the government.
Media System	Independence of Press	As the independence of the press increases, politicians lose personal relationships and contacts with owners, managers and journalists, contributing to a greater willingness to publish critical news, requiring governments to adopt more sophisticated public relations strategies to manage the news.	No evidence of personal links between the premier and the press.
	Predominance of Television	An influential television media sector contributes to greater competition in the news media, shortens soundbites, and elevates the importance of visual components of news, all requiring politicians to make use of professional public relations.	Television contributed to critical news stories and forms of attack journalism.
Issue-specific conflict configurations			
	Loss imposition or prosperity	When governments seek to impose losses on electorally important constituencies, they risk electoral sanction or defeat and rely on public relations strategies to insulate themselves.	Provincial government levied unpopular taxes, restrained public services and received no public credit for attempting to deal with the deficit
	Do issues draw on traditions of political culture?	When politicians face agendas composed of issues that can be plausibly linked to traditions within political culture, aggressive public relations strategies are unnecessary because citizens are more likely to see their interests align with the government's.	-the provincial government suffered from the Meech Lake Accord, the Reform Party drew strong support because of Getty's support.

Instead, very little changed. The budget for the Public Affairs Bureau was stable and although there was some increase in public relations staff seconded to departments, it retained its civil service character. After the 1989 election shock, there was substantial

discussion within government about changing its public relations practices. This election resulted in two reports advocating two very different strategies. The first report advocated minimizing journalists' access to the premier, going so far as to recommend physically barring the media from the Premier's Office. The second report recommended recognizing the legitimacy of the news media, working with them by providing them with information and politicizing the Public Affairs Bureau to draw upon public relations expertise within that organization. Almost exclusively, the government adopted the first recommendations. The Premier's Office was walled off and access to the Premier by members of the press gallery dropped sharply, according to a wide range of interview subjects. In response to the recommendations within the second report, the Getty government created a cabinet communications committee, appointed the Managing Director of the Public Affairs Bureau to that body and tried to get departmental directors of communication to sit on their respective executive committees. These reforms had limited effect. The cabinet communications committee was hampered by a policy that prevented cabinet committees from enforcing their own decisions and by the fact that most of its members were not overly influential within cabinet as a whole. The requirement to have departmental directors of communication on executive committees was simply never enforced.

Similarly, as the fate of Kowalski's proposals for a public relations campaign on the environment demonstrated, advertising campaigns were almost exclusively in the hands of individual departments, on occasion working at cross-purposes with other departments. And the cabinet communications committee was unable to exert any influence on

departmental practices. When the government did get an advertising campaign off the ground, as for example, in the 1991 budget, it was in support of a futile cause, one that lacked any credibility.

Other reforms had consequences, but these were far too late and minimal to have any impact. For example, the Public Affairs Bureau finally persuaded Getty that central public opinion research was necessary, and the 1991 omnibus survey was the result. The survey data led directly to the decision to launch more government task forces to examine ways of increasing citizen participation and interaction with the government. The communications task force in turn resulted in an increased political and strategic capacity for the Public Affairs Bureau at the expense of its bureaucratic and administrative functions.

These reforms were only instituted in 1992 and, by this time, the Getty government was in free fall. In February, a former Getty cabinet minister called on the premier to resign. In July, a public opinion survey suggested the Alberta Liberals had the support of 41% of the electorate to 30% for the Progressive Conservatives and 27% for the NDP (Enviroics 1992). By the fall, Getty had agreed to the Charlottetown Accord and announced his resignation to concentrate on persuading Albertans to support the agreement.

This simply raises the question of why Premier Getty *did not* recognize the dangers of his situation. To this, there are two possible answers. First, it is possible that Getty, as an individual politician, lacked the intuition necessary to grasp the changed situation. One

interview subject suggested that Getty was simply not a particularly capable politician. “I don’t think that Getty was as intuitive an individual as either Lougheed or Klein and I don’t think you can underestimate that factor” (Interview 1). Getty certainly did have a talent for making awkward comments to the news media that generated substantial negative publicity. This created a bias within the government for public relations strategies that emphasized minimal access by the news media to the Premier. However, in a political environment of harsh retrenchment, heavy partisan competition and an independent and professional news media, this strategy is difficult to execute.

A kinder, yet not contradictory, answer is that Getty had a principled commitment to a separation of public service communication from political communication. He was, after all, the first minister in charge of the Public Affairs Bureau when it was first set up to increase the professionalism and efficiency of provincial government communications. That Getty carried forward the overall design of Lougheed’s executive apparatus and shared many of the same staff and politicians does lend some support to this proposition.

It is essential to note, however, that those elements that formed the political core of the Klein government were at the very heart of all these discussions about government public relations. Klein was a member of the cabinet communications committee and was aware of its difficulties in enforcing its decision, as in the case of Minister Fjordbotten’s curious advertising campaign to remind hunters to put out their campfires. Similarly, Klein would have been aware of the problem posed by the fact that the Public Affairs Bureau lacked the financial resources to launch cross-government public relations campaign. He saw how the public relations campaign on the environment was dismissed. Klein was

also a member of the 1991 communications task force that recognized the limited authority of the Public Affairs Bureau and recommended increasing its political and strategic character. Moreover, both of Klein's deputy premiers were involved in the same processes; Peter Elzinga and Ken Kowalski were members of the communications cabinet committee as chair and vice-chair. As such, the decisions to reform government communications that will be outlined in the next chapter have to be examined as a reaction to the trial and error of reforms in the Getty government. Where the Getty government failed sufficiently to adapt to the changing political and institutional environment, the Klein government succeeded. The story of the next chapter is the culmination of the public relations state in Alberta.

Chapter 4: Selling The Impossible — Premier Ralph Klein and the Public Relations State

Three days after Ralph Klein won the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Public Affairs Bureau prepared a document for the new government's transition team with the ambitious title *Opportunity for Change: A New Dialogue with Albertans*. "The election of a new Premier creates significant opportunity to demonstrate a new openness in government communications and a new consultative approach in dealing with Albertans" (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1992). The document recommended that the new government adopt a wide range of new communications practices including an increased attention to symbolic gestures, making television documentary programs about decision-making processes and increasing the level of coordination between the Premier's Office, the Executive Council Office and the Public Affairs Bureau

The new political leadership shared this desire. On December 18, 1992, just six days after Premier Klein and his government were sworn in, the new Minister responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau, Ken Kowalski, distributed a memo to all cabinet ministers. The memo suggested a new regime in the field of government public relations was at hand.

As a government, we have some challenging opportunities before us in communicating and consulting with Albertans. How we handle communications, both internally and externally, will be a measure of our commitment to a more open and accessible government. As well, we will want to demonstrate to Albertans and employees that we are a unified team and function as 'government as a whole.' A shared understanding and coordinated approach to our communications will help us achieve this goal (Kowalski 1992).

Although the Klein government initially reduced the budget of the Public Affairs Bureau and government advertising as a whole (see figures B-1 and B-3), it increased public opinion research and centralized and politicized the public relations staff. It instituted a much closer relationship between public relations staff and the political level of government, transformed the Public Affairs Bureau into an organization providing strategic advice at the expense of its technical and bureaucratic capacities, made greater use of public opinion research, adopted sophisticated and manipulative news management techniques to influence journalists and made much greater use of symbols in its language and communications than did the Getty or the Lougheed governments.

The model of incentives and opportunities introduced in chapter one helps explain why Premier Klein's government made these choices and why they enabled his government to both win reelection and implement very controversial retrenchment policies. When he became premier, Klein was facing an environment of heavy partisan competition, low voter turnout, an independent non-partisan news media and a political agenda of fiscal retrenchment. Kriesi's model (2003) suggests that each of these variables create an incentive for a political actor to use public relations strategies to influence public opinion. Premier Klein did just that.

4.1 Political Issues

In Premier Klein's first term, fiscal issues of retrenchment overshadowed all other political issues. Constitutional questions had disappeared from the political agenda and questions of economic diversification were linked to a general retrenchment of public spending. Where Premier Getty retained policies of public intervention in the economy in the interests of diversification, Klein rejected this approach in favour of a neoliberal program of deregulation and tax and spending cuts, linking the dual goals of balancing the budget and diversifying the economy in a single political agenda of building "a climate conducive to investment, wealth generation and job creation" (Alberta Economic Development and Tourism 1993, 6). As a result, economic diversification was to be achieved not by supporting particular companies, but by facilitating a business-friendly environment of low taxes, privatized public services, retrenched public spending and a minimal regulatory framework. By rejecting tax increases, the provincial government made deep cuts in the core of the welfare state necessary. Getting wide sectors of the population to accept these losses was a significant political challenge. While much could be written about an inherent free market ideology within Alberta political culture, this can be overstated. Albertans, like most voters, are also keen consumers of generous public services, such as health care and education (Barrie 2003). Withdrawing these universally available services was bound to be politically unpopular, and the cabinet was explicitly warned about this when a benchmark public opinion survey was presented at the 1991 cabinet retreat (see page 127). That survey revealed that, while there was popular support

for addressing the problem of the debt and deficit, people rejected large spending reductions as a solution.

The 1993 budget was the first in the four-year plan to eliminate the deficit. Because it was introduced just prior to a general election, it struck a careful balance between signaling to the electorate that the government was serious about reducing the deficit, without jeopardizing its fragile reelection chances.⁴⁵ As a result, it called for \$700 million in cuts, including \$151 million from the health budget. After winning the general election in June, the government prepared the much more serious spending cuts and privatization measures for 1994. This was the lynchpin budget in the entire deficit-reduction strategy, cutting \$956 million from the provincial budget, reducing wages by 5% and laying off 1800 government workers (Alberta Treasury 1994). In 1995, the government cut another \$478 million in spending despite ending 1994 with a \$110 million surplus because of higher than expected resource revenues (Alberta Treasury 1995). The political challenges were magnified because the Klein government had so strongly adopted a fiscally conservative position it denied itself the political tool of cutting taxes until well after the debt and deficit were eliminated.

It is true that in the later stages of Premier Klein's administration, the provincial government had to deal with a very different political agenda of tremendous prosperity set off by a global rise in natural gas and oil prices. However, when Premier Klein first took office and instituted the bulk of the changes to government public relations

⁴⁵ The Progressive Conservatives could not be certain, in any way, that they would be reelected in the 1993 election.

practices, his government could not count on this increase. Natural resource revenues did increase slightly in 1996 and 1997, making it easier to balance the budget and secure reelection, but these paled in comparison to the transformative increases that started in the late 1990s.

The second major political issue the Klein government faced was the deep sense of alienation from the political process within the electorate.⁴⁶ Consequently, Klein introduced a number of reforms. First, after 1993, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly was elected by secret ballot. Second, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* became law in 1995. Third, the government introduced a committee system for government MLAs and integrated these committees into the cabinet policy process. Fourth, and finally, the government made commitments to increase the role of public consultations in the policy-making process. All of these policy and procedural changes were meant to bolster Premier Klein's reputation as a populist politician with close ties to the electorate.

However, in reality, most of these reforms had very serious limitations. For example, the committee system introduced by Premier Klein, far from representing a more robust vision of representative democracy, undermined the capacity of the legislature to hold the executive responsible for its actions. These committees were not actually policy committees of the legislature. Instead, they were committees of the executive council to which government MLAs were appointed and directly integrated into the cabinet's policy

⁴⁶ See chapter 3 for the discussion on the demand for participation and the rise of the anti-party sentiment and the rise of the Reform Party.

process. One deep flaw in the policy is its violation of one of the core principles of Westminster parliamentary systems, which is that the executive must be held to account by the legislature, in public. The Klein committee system, however, was only open to government MLAs, mostly met in secret and was totally integrated into the cabinet's policy processes. As a result, cabinet ministers met with government legislators and forged support for their policies behind closed doors, presenting policies to the legislature with majority support already assured. While party discipline usually makes a mockery of the notion that a majority of the legislature holds the executive to account, fusing government legislators with the cabinet *behind closed doors* further obscures the interaction between the legislative majority and the cabinet.⁴⁷

With regards to the introduction of freedom of information legislation, Savoie argues that this, combined with the resultant media scrutiny of internal administrative misbehaviour, increases the demand within government for politically sensitive troubleshooters, such as public relations professionals, who can manage controversial issues (1999, 349). Roberts (2005) has identified similar processes in the United Kingdom and warned that such trends may undermine the intent of freedom of information legislation. In Alberta, the introduction of such legislation, increased the demand for public relations professionals, sensitive to how requests under the *Freedom of*

⁴⁷ See Brownsey (2005) for an additional discussion as to how Premier Klein's committee reforms strengthened the Premier's Office in particular.

Information and Protection of Privacy legislation could be treated within the news media.⁴⁸

Finally, it will be shown below that the practice of public consultations was limited in several important ways. First, they were often held with a very narrow mandate, after core political decisions had already been made. Second, the consultations were nearly always composed of handpicked participants. Third, when the provincial government took the step of sending out “mail back” surveys asking for input into the budget process the results were always suspect because of the non-random nature of the sampling. Finally, the commitment to public consultations demonstrably increased the demands for professionals within government who could manage difficult processes of stakeholder consultation. In the case of Alberta, the public relations staff who managed these processes were simultaneously placed in a close relationship with their political superiors, raising serious questions about their loyalties to a permanent, neutral civil service or the provincial government with particular partisan interests.

Thus, the need to justify substantial losses to a wide segment of the population combined with the introduction of a series of measures addressing concerns about unresponsive government, contributed to an increased importance and political role for the government of Alberta’s public relations bureaucracy.

⁴⁸ One departmental communications director confirmed the way these staff kept in close contact with departmental Freedom of Information and Protection and Privacy offices. He noted that in particularly sensitive requests, he could be notified about the details of the request up to two weeks prior to its release so that he could prepare a response (Interview 15).

4.2 The Media Environment

When Premier Klein took power, the Canadian television and newspaper industries were attracting equal shares of advertising expenditures, which represents a comparatively television-heavy media landscape, compared to previous Canadian experience and to other countries (see Figure B-4). The model introduced in chapter one suggests that such a context creates incentives for politicians to rely on public relations strategies.

Similarly, Klein could not count on the deferential media that Premier Lougheed had faced, despite his previous career as a journalist. While his carefully cultivated populist image and the adoption of neoliberal policies endeared him to the Edmonton *Sun* and Calgary *Sun*, his government could not count on similar support from other media outlets. The day that Klein launched his leadership campaign, a CBC radio reporter asked him if “Albertans were ready for a drunk as Premier (quoted in Martin 2002, 256)?”⁴⁹ Relations with the Calgary *Herald* were also cool. One radio reporter recalled: “He felt that the *Herald* didn’t back the hometown candidate in the leadership campaign and that really pissed him off because he was in the fight of his political life at that time. Betkowski probably would have been more their style because she was more like the rest of us were” (Interview 4).⁵⁰ A second journalist recalled the animosity between Klein’s government and the *Herald* as follows: “Klein at one time used to slam the *Herald* in speeches

⁴⁹ A broadcast reporter (Interview 4) recalled this anecdote as well.

⁵⁰ In his biography of Klein, Martin makes note of the fact that the wife of the *Herald*’s publisher, Kevin Peterson, was an eager supporter of Nancy Betkowski. The Klein camp noted that the *Herald* displayed a degree of media bias when it quoted her on the front page of the *Herald* two days before the first ballot as saying that selling party memberships to women on behalf of Betkowski was proving fruitful. “It’s one of the easiest things I’ve done. They [women] can’t sign up fast enough (Martin 2002, 114).”

constantly when I was down there. He and Love used to think the *Herald* was very, very negative towards them” (Interview 19). Moreover, the *Herald* had declined to endorse Klein’s party in the 1993 election campaign, as they had reluctantly done in 1989. Instead, they invited voters to “take a leap of faith” and run the risk of electing an inexperienced opposition Liberal party, or risk electing a Progressive Conservative party that would have failed to change its ways as Klein had promised (No author, 1993). As premier, Klein criticized both the Calgary *Herald* and the Edmonton *Journal* along with the rest of his political opponents. “My critics in Alberta can generally be defined as: the opposition Liberals, New Democrats, Southam Newspapers, special interest groups, and, most importantly, the friends of the status quo” (Klein, 1994).

The Edmonton *Journal* maintained its traditional centrist position and made a point of raising the human consequences of the budget cuts in repeated stories about institutional failure. A print journalist from the *Edmonton Journal* recalled this trend: “This is a really important part of the news media; to cover the public institutions that don’t function or are hurting people. But these stories began to be dismissed as ‘victim of the day’ stories, not as examples of government that wasn’t working. Normal journalism of that sort got to be downplayed, but that’s healthy journalism” (Interview 2).

In short, when Premier Klein took power, he was facing a media landscape that had a comparatively strong television presence and independent, non-partisan news media. The model introduced in chapter one suggested that in both situations, political actors have strong incentives to use public relations tactics to shape public opinion to their advantage.

4.3 Party System

While trying to impose significant losses, Premier Klein also had to contend with substantial partisan competition prior to and after the 1993 election. Given the depth of unpopularity the Getty government had faced, Premier Klein's win was unexpected and subsequently dubbed the "Miracle on the Prairies" (Dabbs 1995, 109). The election was the most competitive election of any since 1971. Klein's government won 44% of the votes, just 50,000 votes ahead of the Liberal Party. The party system remained competitive until after the 1997 election. Between 1993 and 1997, the Liberals had a large opposition caucus, with regional representation from all parts of the province and the party won a by-election in rural Alberta in 1996.

At the same time, this high level of partisan competition took place in the context of a party system dominated by weak parties (as measured by voter turnout). Although voter turnout jumped in 1993 to 60%, as both the Progressive Conservatives and the Alberta Liberals increased their absolute vote totals, it fell back to 54% in the 1997 election. Both values, however, were far lower than the average turnout for Canadian provincial elections in the 1990s – 73.5% (see Figure B-6).

In short, Premier Klein's political agenda of fiscal retrenchment took place in an era of heavy partisan competition and low voter turnout. The model introduced in chapter one suggests that in this situation, politicians have a strong incentive to use public relations practices to shape public opinion. Premier Klein made substantial reforms to the government's public relations practices to accomplish precisely this. Although partisan

competition dropped substantially after the 1997 election lessening the pressure on Premier Klein's government, this was not the case when Klein took power.

4.4 Public Relations Under Premier Ralph Klein

In keeping with the general commitment to reducing spending, the Klein government initially reduced expenditures to the Public Affairs Bureau and continued the Getty government's reductions in government advertising (see figures B-1 and B-3).

Nevertheless, the new government made a number of other reforms – further centralizing the public relations bureaucracy and politicizing it to a degree not yet seen before – that proved to be integral in implementing a difficult policy of retrenchment and, on the surface, responding to public demands for greater participation. The consequences were to rescue the Progressive Conservative dynasty from its electoral crisis, give the government a greater capacity to dominate the news media and, finally, have public relations professionals take on some of the roles historically assigned to political parties.

For example, the Klein government addressed the Getty government's weak capacity to coordinate government public relations by making the Public Affairs Bureau answer first to Deputy Premier Ken Kowalski and, six months later, to Premier Klein. Under Getty, creating a cabinet communications committee failed utterly to address this problem.

However, links to the Prime Minister's Office – or in this case, the Premier's Office – are essential aspects of a central agency's strength. Savoie's study of central agencies in the Canadian government is explicit on this point. "They all play on each other's turf, and all need the full support of the Prime Minister to be effective" (1999, 4). Elsewhere, central

agencies have been described as “extensions of the office of the Prime Minister” (Kroeger 1998, 11). Historically, however, the Public Affairs Bureau had lacked this close link, precisely to keep it politically insulated. Previously, it had always been assigned to a minister, almost always as a secondary portfolio. Assigning the PAB to the Premier’s Office had three major consequences.

First, it communicated a signal to the rest of the bureaucracy that the communications function was to be given the highest priority. One public relations official put it this way:

That was a manifestation and a demonstration of the importance he placed on communications, by saying ‘I will be the minister responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau’ it sent a message to the rest of the government about the importance that was placed on communications and public consultation and involvement and those kinds of things (Interview 15).

Klein’s Chief of Staff, Rod Love, explained the move as follows:

Communications has to be coordinated at the most senior level of any organization. I don’t care if it’s the Government of Alberta or Apple Computer. You can’t leave strategic communications of a large organization to mid-level management. People in an organization want to hear from the top. That’s why the decision was taken to take the Public Affairs Bureau and move it directly – essentially – into the Premier’s Office as a signal that communications was a priority. And every one in the organization was expected to understand that everyone in government was going to have to communicate to all of their constituents (Interview with Rod Love).

The second consequence was to improve materially the capacity of the Premier’s Office to coordinate cross-government communication. A public relations official who worked in Premier Klein’s press office recalled it this way: “It made a partnership out of the Director of Communications and the Managing Director of the Public Affairs Bureau.

It gave a mandate for coordination in a way that was not possible under Premier Getty's government" (Interview 9). The changed reporting relationship also aided cross-government coordination by elevating the status of the Director of Communications in each individual department (Interview 8; Interview 9). As a result, these staff members were placed in a position that rivaled deputy ministers within departmental hierarchies. A former official with the PAB called the relationship between a departmental director of communications, the deputy minister and the minister "the golden triangle" (Interview 14). This relationship was buttressed by a strictly enforced decision to require directors of communication to sit on their department's executive team, which had not been the case in the previous government (Interview 14). A public relations official from the Getty government observed this trend after joining a private sector public relations firm and argued, "What they've done is politicized the bureaucrats and bureaucratized the electeds [sic]" (Interview 5).

The third consequence of the changed reporting relationship was to shrink the distinct space between a civil service public relations bureaucracy and politicians, contributing to a politicization of the public relations bureaucracy that had been tempered in the past by commitments to autonomy. Making the Public Affairs Bureau responsible to the Premier increased the importance of the Premier's Office in the complex reporting relationship in which public relations staff worked. A civil servant in Premier Klein's Executive Council Office noted that: "One of the direct consequences [of the move to the Premier's Office] on a day-to-day level was that they [PAB staff] believed they reported to the Premier's Office" (Interview 13). Organization charts reflected the new importance of

the Premier's Office: for the first time since 1975 the Press Office appeared in a consultative relationship with the managing director and departmental directors of communication (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1994).

The reporting relationship for directors of communication had always been a vexing question in the particular institutional design of the Public Affairs Bureau. They were hired by a central agency headed by a secondary minister and then assigned to a line department to work under a civil service deputy minister and a political minister. A public relations official with the Klein government described the formal accountability relationship as follows: "Communications directors are accountable to the managing director and it is the managing director who does their appraisal, but there is a dotted line to the deputy minister and a dotted line to the minister" (Interview 10). A second public relations official argued there existed three lines of accountability.

As a communications director in the Alberta government, you almost had a three-level reporting process. All communications staff were employed by the PAB and then you were assigned to a department. So on paper, your direct reporting relationship in terms of who employed you was the PAB so the directors would report to the Managing Director. On a day-to-day basis, in terms of the department, you reported to the deputy minister, but at the same time on a broader basis, you reported directly to the minister (Interview 15).

This style of reporting relationship is known in management literature as a "matrix relationship" (Interview 10). The rationale for these relationships is to increase productivity by giving employees more than one supervisor: a functional supervisor and a project manager. But one of the major drawbacks is a decline in accountability, because it often is unclear who is responsible for a task. One public relations official with a line

department emphasized this and had a hard time clearly identifying to whom he was accountable. “Who am I accountable to? That’s a good question. It’s confusing and not really clear. I’ve gotten shit from my manager, from my deputy, from the Public Affairs Bureau and the Premier’s Office” (Interview 12).

Two other measures served to reinforce the close relationship between the Premier’s Office and departmental directors of communication. First, the new government instituted daily meetings during the legislative session. Klein’s chief of staff, Rod Love described the meetings as follows:

There was a daily communications meeting every day at 7 am among every communications officer for every department where the messages of the day were discussed. Everyone understood what all the other departments were doing, but the central messages about what was going on were developed. If Environment one day had messages about some program that they were going to discontinue, that was specific to Environment. But the general theme that we are spending beyond our means was incorporated into that. So notwithstanding the fact that different ministries had different announcements every day of the week, the same central messages and themes were woven into the language that those individual ministries were using (Interview with Rod Love).

Of course, by instituting these kinds of meetings, the notion of distinct spaces between the political level and the civil service was further undermined. This is an environment where tactical, narrow, and partisan considerations were foremost. For example, one interview subject, who was a participant in these meetings, related an anecdote concerning Premier Klein’s involvement in a political conflict over whether or not he had publicly promoted a company in which he and his wife were private investors. The premier’s director of communications turned to the weekly meeting for advice.

There was a meeting of communications directors, Jim Dau [the Premier's Director of Communications] was there and that was the time that Ralph was involved in the Multi-Corp affair that had been raging for a week and a bit. And that is not really a government thing, that's kind of a private thing that somebody does on government time. It doesn't really involve public services or anything. So you've got a meeting with all these communications directors and Dau is at the front, saying 'we've got a problem, the Premier is involved in this situation and it's becoming a big issue, so if anyone's got any ideas, maybe you can tell us what we can do.' So the whole room was silent, and I mentioned that there should be an apology and the money should be given to charity, which is what he subsequently did. But it was an example of the communications directors being used for partisan purposes (Interview 6).

Second, the new government made a conscious decision to have the Premier's Press Office staffed not by former journalists, as under Premiers Lougheed and Getty, but by civil service staff from the Public Affairs Bureau. During Premier Klein's entire government, every senior staff member in the press office – except for two – was seconded by the Public Affairs Bureau then returned to a public relations position in a department or to actually head the Public Affairs Bureau.⁵¹ By doing this, the Premier's Press Office became a stop in the career paths of public relations professionals in the government of Alberta, further blurring the distinction between civil service and political public relations.

In addition to strengthening the relationship between directors of communication and the Office of the Premier, two reforms tightened the relationship between ministers and departmental directors of communication. First, ministers took on a more active role in

⁵¹ Appendix A lists the names of every person who occupied a senior position in the Premier's Press Office from 1971 – 2006 as well as the position they held just prior to joining the Press Office and the position they held following working in the Press Office. References for each step in each person's career path are listed.

hiring directors of communications, although overall authority lay with the Public Affairs Bureau. One departmental director observed this as follows:

When I was first hired with the Alberta government, when Getty was Premier, there was no interview process or involvement with the elected level of government; it was strictly with the Public Affairs Bureau and the deputy minister of the department. But after that, ministers began to take a much more active role in the approval process; they didn't necessarily sit down and interview the candidates, but there was often a final interview with the candidate chosen (Interview 14).

As a result, the Communications Director became the only position in the Alberta public service beyond the Deputy Minister where ministers had input into the selection.

Second, departmental Directors of Communication began to move with ministers when they shifted portfolios. This evolution is evident from Table 6.

Table 6: Relations Between Directors of Communication and Ministers 1986-2006		
	Getty	Klein
Departmental moves	18	12
Ministerial moves	0	18
<p><i>“Departmental moves” are defined as instances where a departmental Director of Communication retained his or her position when a Minister changed portfolios. “Ministerial moves” are defined as instances where a departmental Director of Communication moved with the respective minister to a new portfolio. Data are compiled by the author from Alberta government telephone directories (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1986-2005).</i></p>		

One reason for this was the closer relationship between the senior public relations staff and the ministers. A departmental public relations director described this evolution as follows:

Because communications had such an integral role in the operation of departments in government, you developed a very close relationship between ministers and their communications directors just because there was more day-to-day contact. Often, there would be more day-to-day contact between the director and the minister than there would be between the minister and the deputy minister. So there would in some cases be a comfort level that had been built up between the minister and the director. And ministers came to realize what a critical role that these staff played in their departments. So if they had somebody who they were comfortable with and had confidence in, they would ask for the communications director to stay with them (Interview 15).

Regardless of the motivation, one of the consequences of this trend was to create a tight political relationship between ministers and departmental public relations staff. This is an important deviation from the traditional model of the civil service, as a body that can provide professional, technical and competent advice to the political leadership of government without fear of loss of employment. Under the model developed under Premier Klein, a director of communications, a managerial position responsible for several staff, would normally be assigned to a department, work closely with his or her minister and then often move with that minister to the next department. If a director's career path is tied to a minister, it would, in all likelihood, inhibit her ability to provide independent, neutral advice. Rather, it is an environment where a civil servant will tend to see his or her interests align closely with the political interests of the minister. Ultimately, under Premier Klein, the position of director of communication was transformed from being a civil servant oriented primarily to the department and the Public Affairs Bureau to a position on par with the deputy minister, reporting to both the minister and the Premier's Office via the Public Affairs Bureau.

Two anecdotes of partisan activities by public servants reinforce the argument that the Klein government transformed the relationship between bureaucratic public relations staff and political offices, such that the former became much more attuned to the latter's interests and desires. First, the *Edmonton Journal* reported on February 22, 1997 that the Managing Director of the Public Affairs Bureau served simultaneously on the Progressive Conservative election campaign during the 1993 and 1997 election campaigns (Danylchuk and Rusnell). Second, during the 2001 election campaign, the premier's director of communications, also a former departmental director of communications in the civil service, properly took a leave of absence to work as the premier's spokesperson during the 2001 election campaign. However, after the campaign, he returned to the Press Office and was later appointed to the civil service position of managing director of the Public Affairs Bureau (See Appendix A).

In addition to shrinking the space between the public relations bureaucracy and the elected government, Klein's government made a number of changes to the mandate and function of the Public Affairs Bureau, the net effect of which was to strengthen its role as a provider of strategic communications advice to departments and the Premier's Office and to lessen its bureaucratic, technical and creative roles.⁵² For example, it ceased coordinating, shipping and storing trade show exhibits in May 1993. In 1994, it closed its printing and duplication center and it ceased being the central provider for photographic development, leaving departments to sign their own contracts. It also ceased overseeing media buying for advertising campaigns, having contracted this service to three

⁵² The Communications Task Force discussed precisely this type of transformation

advertising firms, one of which was very well connected with the Progressive Conservative Party.⁵³ In 1996, it delegated to departments the authority for the purchase of audio-visual equipment.⁵⁴ By contrast, in 1994, the Government Communications Group was created to provide strategic public relations advice to arms-length agencies, boards and commissions (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1996). This process of emphasizing the strategic, advisory capacity at the expense of other, less controversial functions culminated in 2006 when Klein adopted a committee's recommendations to assign the government's call center, the Queen's Printer and the government bookstore to

⁵³ The firm that won this contract, Highwood Communications, is a leading Calgary advertising company and was an early volunteer supporter of Ralph Klein's leadership bid and all the subsequent Progressive Conservative election campaigns (Walton 2004). While the close relationships between the party, this advertising firm and the Government of Alberta raise suspicions about the propriety of this contract, it is also the case that separating the media buying function for advertising campaigns from creative and strategic work is a widespread and sensible trend. Traditionally, advertising firms would do the strategic, creative and media buying work and then be paid as a commission of the overall media space purchased. This often created a conflict of interest as the advertising firm had an incentive in recommending as large a media buy as possible. Separating the creative and strategic work from the media buying function eliminates this conflict of interest (Interview 9). Ultimately, it is impossible to know whether this relationship is proper or not. The Auditor-General has declined to investigate the contract. It does appear that the contract is renewable and an interview with a public relations official in the Klein government familiar with the advertising process suggests that the decision on the approval of the contract rests with a committee of civil servants (Interview 24). However, what can be said is that it reflects a close relationship between the government public relations bureaucracy, the Progressive Conservative Party and significant elements of the Alberta advertising and public relations industry. It also reflects the diminishing role the Public Affairs Bureau played in bureaucratic and administrative functions under Premier Klein, because after this contract was put in place, Highwood Communications sent invoices directly to departments for media purchasing, bypassing the Public Affairs Bureau (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1997).

⁵⁴ This authority derived from a Treasury Board minute from 1975 and it was originally intended to prevent the duplication of resources (Alberta Government Services 1975). It was one of only two administrative regulations that gave the Public Affairs Bureau any authority. The delegation of this authority probably reflects both the diminishing costs of audio-visual communications equipment – and hence concerns about the costs of duplication – but also the diminishing role the Public Affairs Bureau played as an organization dedicated to preventing the duplication and inefficiency under the Klein government.

other ministries (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 2006, 23).⁵⁵ These were almost the last remaining services provided by the Public Affairs Bureau that had a bureaucratic and administrative role.

The Public Affairs Bureau was also assigned a greater role to play in administering the constant stream of public consultations that the Klein government instituted. The unit composed of public relations staff was renamed the “Communications Planning and Consultation Division” to give public consultations a more formal status within government. Shortly after the 1993 election, a special sub-committee was established to develop standards that departments could use. The Klein government relied on several kinds of consultation: mail-back surveys, stakeholder consultations, internet-based surveys and more traditional forms of public opinion research such as focus groups and telephone surveys. These measures were directly related to the Klein government’s belief that it was engaging citizens in the political process. For example, the briefing book for the new Minister of the Public Affairs Bureau described the ongoing omnibus survey as follows: “Research is a cost-efficient and effective method of consulting that contributes to the bigger picture of how Albertans feel about specific subjects. Also, with the rise and increasing influence of special interest groups, research can act as a balance by giving the ‘average’ Albertan a voice as well” (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1993, 4).

⁵⁵ Ironically, when the PAB was publicly accused of excessive partisanship in 2004, the Managing Director at the time used these very services as evidence of the organization’s politically neutral character (Rusnell 2004, 2).

These shifts from a bureaucratic and administrative mandate to a more strategic, political mandate are evident from the proportion of its costs dedicated to the three branches within the Public Affairs Bureau: administration, public relations staff seconded to departments and creative and technical services (see Figure B-2). In 1993-1994, the communications planning section, which is comprised of the public relations professionals in the departments, accounted for only 38% of PAB expenditures. By 2004, that number had risen to 59% (see Figure B-3). This reflects a clear shift in emphasis in the mandate of the Public Affairs Bureau, in favour of human resources providing strategic public relations advice and away from the human resources providing technical assistance and creative support for publicity projects.

One incident illustrates the kind of advice the political public relations staff provided for cabinet ministers. In 2003, there was a controversy over whether or not an aid program for Alberta ranchers had ended up instead assisting large packing companies. During the controversy over whether public funds had been misused, the Director of Communications of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development prepared a document of key messages (Rusnell 2004, 2). The document was part of a broader package of similar information prepared by communications staff and uploaded to a website accessible only to government communications staff and elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (Rusnell 2004, 3). Some of the information produced for the minister and the government caucus is benign. For example, it noted that “the Auditor-General will review how our BSE compensation was spent – just like he does for all government program spending every year” (Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural

Development undated). However, the same document contains many suggested responses that are either vacuous or outright partisan attacks and reveal just what civil service staff in the Public Affairs Bureau felt appropriate. Some of the more questionable passages in the document include the following:

Our producers qualified for these programs on the basis of their cattle inventory. We're not going to ask them to open their books just because the NDs don't know the first thing about the agriculture sector.

The [New Democrats] talk about value for money. We know the value of \$1 spent in our cattle industry is multiplied countless times – in local grocery stores, at farm equipment dealers or by support industries like trucking companies.

In short, without these programs, we wouldn't have a cattle industry. Nor much of a rural Alberta.

The [New Democrats] constant talk of price fixing shows how little they understand the way our cattle industry – and the free market – works.

When you have oversupply, you can expect prices to go down – that's the way the free market works (Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development undated).

When pressed on the propriety of civil service staff preparing speaking notes for the minister and government MLAs of this nature, the responsible official simply replied in a news story: “I can say that the minister believes those statements to be truth” (Rusnell 2004, 3). Whether the cabinet minister believed the sentiments expressed in the document to be true is not important here. The point is that, under Premier Klein, the public relations staff of the Public Affairs Bureau had been totally transformed and elevated. Under Premiers Getty and Lougheed, these staff members were demonstrably

part of an organization that operated at some distance from the political level of government and had a mandate to ensure quality and efficiency in government publicity. Under Premier Klein, many of the bureaucratic and creative services of the Public Affairs Bureau had been privatized or delegated to departments while the public relations staff seconded to departments were placed in a close position to both ministers and the Premier's Office to engage in tactical and strategic political advice that often descended into rank partisanship.

At the same time that the Klein government adopted a much tighter relationship between the public relations staff and the political level of government and transformed the Public Affairs Bureau to emphasize its strategic public relations function, they also adopted the much more manipulative, sophisticated and sometimes aggressive news management tactics associated with the public relations state. One person who worked in the Lougheed government and observed the developments within the Klein government from the private sector commented on the news management tactics as follows: "They're obviously very cagey in terms of how the Premier's Office manages media relations. I think they used carrots and sticks with reporters, they used lots of devices" (Interview 1).

Where the Getty government dealt with the legislative press gallery by trying to minimize access as much as possible, the Klein government pursued dual tactics of providing "information subsidies" to journalists, as well as disciplining them. Gandy (1982) developed the concept of an information subsidy to refer to material generated by news sources to influence the final news product. The concept is premised on the idea of journalists as rational actors with a product – news – to generate each day, but with more

or less fixed time and resources to create that product. By providing journalists with materials – physical space, information, access to news sources – that make the production of news easier, external actors can subsidize the creation of news, in effect, by making the journalists’ job easier. The Klein government adopted three particular types of information subsidies.

First, it increased the speed at which the government could distribute news releases, which are the classic example of an information subsidy that journalists, often pressed for time, can reformulate into a news story or use as a resource for a news story. In April 1994, the capacity of the fax network that distributed government news releases to newsrooms was increased by 70%. Subsequently, one-page news releases could be delivered to all Alberta media outlets within fifteen minutes (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1995, 13). In 1997, the government established a relationship with the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association to post government news releases on the association’s electronic bulletin board, a content-sharing mechanism for rural weekly newspapers (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1997, 7).

A second subsidy took the form of increased access to the Premier. In contrast to Getty, Klein’s office published a weekly itinerary, making it easier for the news media to use him as a constant source for news. More importantly, around 1995⁵⁶, the premier’s press office instituted the practice of making the Klein available for a daily news conference following Question Period where the news media could question directly the Premier on the stories of the day. This tactic had a number of important consequences. It

⁵⁶ Interview subjects were unclear on the precise date of when this practice began.

offered the premier and his staff the opportunity to respond directly to any allegations that were raised by the opposition in Question Period. It also subsidized the work of the press gallery by giving them a news story every day during the legislative session. A print journalist recalled that the strategy provided a ready-made story for journalists. “The 3:00 scrum was brilliant. The opposition set the table with Question Period by revealing something outrageous or new and the Premier responded in the press conference. It meant that we had lots of copy, but it also meant that we didn’t have lots of time looking under rocks” (Interview 3). One wire reporter observed: “This made my job much easier as a stringer⁵⁷ because I had access not just to the premier but to all the other reporters’ questions” (Interview 12). Beginning the press conference at 3:00 pm also made it hard for the opposition parties to comment. After Klein finished with the news media, representatives from the two opposition parties would respond with their own comments. Usually, the ranks of the attendant journalists started to thin immediately after the premier finished because deadlines were approaching (Interview 19).⁵⁸

Third, the Klein government made extensive use of strategic leaks as a form of information subsidy. In a 1999 article published in the *National Post*, Klein’s chief of staff, Rod Love, did history the favour of setting down on paper his view of the nature

⁵⁷ A stringer is a freelance journalist with an ongoing relationship with a news organization but who is paid on a per contribution basis. Stringers are used in place of full-time correspondents to provide updates for news organizations when necessary.

⁵⁸ When Stockwell Day and Rod Love moved to Ottawa to take over the new Canadian Alliance, they tried to duplicate this practice in Ottawa and informed the Parliamentary Press Gallery that he would not meet the press in scrums in the lobby of the House of Commons. Instead, he wanted to hold formal press conferences. According to the *Globe and Mail* of September 23rd, 2000, the Press Gallery formally blocked Day’s move, refusing to attend his press conferences until all daily scrums had finished. Day backed down.

and purpose of leaking information to journalists. While the article was published years after he left the government, it provides a clue into how a central political figure of the Klein government viewed the tactic. Leaks, in his eyes, had five purposes: to destabilize the opponent; to release information about an opponent to which one cannot publicly attach one's name; to launch a trial balloon about new policy; to distract people from other troubling stories; and to have fun. Moreover, he closed his article warning against trying to conduct witch-hunts to locate the culprit behind an unwanted leak. Instead, he suggested creating an environment where staff would appreciate the value and purpose of the leaking of information. "You are far better off making sure your people understand the right way to leak information, and what a strategic leak can achieve, than worrying about the idiot who thinks he or she just made a new friend in a journalist. Journalists have no friends" (Love 1999). This suggests that the practice of leaking was a widespread phenomenon in the Klein government; not just a practice peculiar to the Premier's Office and Rod Love.⁵⁹

One crucial element to the strategy was to place the condition on journalists that no opposition comment be included in the leaked story. A government official who had worked in a department, the Premier's Office and at senior levels of the Public Affairs Bureau explained this as follows: "The rationale for giving information out to one news outlet would be that you would get one news story with a clear interpretation. Under Getty, a news story would lead with the criticism. This way, you got at least one clear

⁵⁹ Similarly, one senior public relations official in the Klein government noted that media relations skills became more important in the hiring of departmental Directors of Communication (Interview 14).

run and the next day's announcements and the next day's story could have the critics" (Interview 10).

The newspaper coverage of Premier Klein's decision to remove Deputy Premier Ken Kowalski from office reveals how the strategy of leaking was used and its consequences. In 1994, Klein removed Kowalski from cabinet because of an internal power struggle between the two (Martin 2002, 144-155). The firing was a media sensation because Kowalski was a highly influential politician, had a very strong base of support in rural Alberta and had been instrumental in delivering the party leadership for Klein. The *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* each published front-page stories for days afterwards, detailing the internal government conflict. In order to deflect public criticism, the government decided to leak confidential financial information that the deficit was falling faster than predicted to Don Martin, a columnist with the *Calgary Herald* and his subsequent biographer. The story ran on the front page of the *Calgary Herald* of October 27th, 1994, four days after Kowalski was fired.

The Alberta deficit is in a freefall, rushing toward elimination faster than even the most optimistic budget projections. A confidential report given to Treasury Board members Wednesday shows another \$300 million has been slashed from the annual deficit in the latest financial quarter. The report now projects the 1994-1995 deficit at just more than \$1 billion.

The only direct quote in the news story is from one source – referred to as an “insider” – who informed Martin that spending cuts would continue, despite the brightening fiscal picture. The leak generated two additional positive stories in the *Calgary Herald*. On October 28th, it featured a story with Premier Klein confirming the fact that the fiscal

situation was improving, and on November 3rd, the newspaper reported Treasurer Jim Dinning making the same point.

The practice of leaking information became more common after Hollinger took over Southam Newspapers in 1996 and after newsrooms began to increase the withdrawal of journalists from the press gallery in the late 1990s. For example, in the days leading up to provincial budgets, leaks became standard practice to maximize coverage given to government priorities. Prior to the 1999 budget, the *Calgary Herald* ran a front-page story on March 9th suggesting that the health department would get a \$1 billion increase in spending. The story attributed the news to “top-ranking sources in Premier Ralph Klein’s government” but only directly quoted opposition politicians and interest group representatives. The next day, the *Herald* published a front-page story suggesting that education spending would increase by \$600 million. Both stories were essentially correct, but in a misleading way. The 1999 budget did increase health and education spending, but the funding increases were to take place over three years, which was not revealed in the original leaks. The overall effect of the news management strategy was a series of front-page news stories announcing imminent multimillion dollar increases in social spending on March 9th, 10th and 11th, followed by the actual announcement of slightly less, though still substantial, increases in spending that were spread out over several years. Prior to the 2000 budget, the situation had reached the point where the *Calgary Herald* published a front-page story days before the budget announcing that the province would increase benefits for seniors. Not a single person was quoted in the story, directly or indirectly. Instead, the opposition’s reaction was characterized in the

journalist's own words. "The 10-per cent increase in Thursday's budget is unlikely to pacify critics, who will argue it is long overdue and doesn't match the increase in the cost of living during the last six years."

The contrast to subsidizing reporters' work in order to influence the final product is to discipline them and the Klein government was not afraid to adopt this tactic. "They would keep a close watch on what you were doing. You would get good leaks if things were going well and you wouldn't if they weren't. There was never any secret about that. Some people see that as sinister, I think they just used it a little more and a little more openly than some other governments" (Interview 19). On other occasions, Klein's Chief of Staff, Rod Love, personally confronted journalists. For example, one journalist with the *Calgary Herald* was warned by Love that he would be "golfing with your boss" (Dabbs 1995, 147). Another print journalist recalled: "You'd get a hostile reaction like Rod Love screaming at me. I can remember one day when we had it out in the hallway. He would phone people at home, I can remember getting phoned at home on a Sunday with him shrieking at me" (Interview 19).

Two particular cases illustrate how all these changes worked together during Premier Klein's administration: the public relations campaign surrounding the 1994 budget and an integrated public relations campaign against the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the House of Commons. Each episode will be examined here to show precisely how the Klein government made widespread and integrated use of manipulative news management tactics, public opinion research and advertising campaigns to further organizational interests.

The Klein government faced two particular challenges in implementing its retrenchment measures. First, it was cutting deeper, faster and affecting more people than the Getty government ever did. Second, it faced the political challenge of having to disassociate itself, in effect, from itself because the Progress Conservative party was widely implicated in the very problem it was trying to solve. Public relations tactics played an integral role at all stages in this process. Where the Getty government had attempted to persuade Albertans that it was seriously addressing the budget deficit with the dry rhetoric of the “best expenditure management record in the country,” and an ineffective 1991 advertising campaign, the Klein government adopted a clear narrative that exaggerated spending increases by the Getty government. Defining the problem as one of increased spending essentially entailed its own solution: spending reductions. Because an alternative narrative was readily available – that the budget deficit was caused by falling revenues from oil and gas – the provincial government had to adopt the entire suite of public relations techniques: the use and manipulation of symbols, public opinion research, and advertising campaigns, the close co-operation of public relations staff across government, public consultations with invited individuals, and a carefully orchestrated roll-out of the budget cuts designed to minimize the capacity for the news media to focus on negative reactions to the budget cuts.

The first step was a budget roundtable in March 1993, where the government had invited specific guests. Although the president of the United Nurses of Alberta took and the chairman of the Alberta Council on Aging (a former leader of the provincial NDP and trade unionist) took part, the participants were invited by the government and largely

reflected professional and academic leadership. The president of the Alberta section of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business questioned the legitimacy of the process, pointing out that there were no labour representatives and that provincial wages would have to be a part of the solution. “Since that group’s [labour] not here, I wonder if we’re just stage props” (Blotting in Crockatt 1993). Moreover, the two conference moderators were members of Edmonton and Calgary’s business elite, with close connections to the Progressive Conservatives (Lisac 1995, 82). One of the discussion moderators was a Calgary oil industry executive who had closely supported Klein in the leadership race (Lisac 1995, 89). Prior to the roundtable, Premier Klein had already committed to legislating a plan to eliminate the deficit. Thus, the only question for the roundtable was the details: how long it should take and whether tax increases should be part of the solution. One newspaper columnist noted that the roundtable was a classic case of Alberta policy making to create the impression of a consensus where none exists.

It looked like an attempt to take the politics out of a basic political task - the allocation of public resources. If you follow through the logic of the round table you end up with a classic Alberta solution - a virtual one-party state; a belief in a broad Alberta consensus with little attention paid to understanding or accommodating different values; haphazard political engagement (Lisac 1995, 89).

Reflecting the new attention to public relations within the Klein government, this process was heavily dominated by the use of symbols and metaphors, one of which was the metaphor of “hitting the wall,” a symbol for a currency crisis where international financial institutions intervene and force harsh measures on an insolvent country. For example, during the budget roundtable, the participants were shown a famous television

documentary about New Zealand's debt crisis, which described the phenomenon of "hitting the wall," when international creditors cease to finance a country's budget deficit.⁶⁰ Just one week after the budget roundtable, the independent financial review commission Klein had put in place to examine the state of the province's finances reported on what it found. The chairman of the commission referred to Alberta's economic situation using the same symbol: "It's like a race car going down the track to a wall" (Williams quoted in Crockatt 1993). Two weeks later, Provincial Treasurer Jim Dinning said: "We haven't hit the wall like Saskatchewan has, but governments across the country are getting closer to that wall" (Dinning quoted in No Author 1993*b*).

The consultation process was duplicated after the Klein government won the 1993 general election and began preparing for the landmark 1994 budget. Government departments were supposed to develop three-year business plans that would be released with the budget. During the fall, each department had to hold roundtable sessions to prepare the business plans and find ways to meet the spending reductions.

After the four-year deficit elimination plan was legislated in 1993 and the Klein government was reelected in that year's general election, a group of departmental public relations officials working under the ironic name of the "Good News Committee," began to plan the public relations campaign for the 1994 budget. The committee was highly politicized. Two of the members were from the premier's Press Office (former Public Affairs Bureau staff members) and one was the Executive Director for Communications

⁶⁰ McQuaig (1994) credits this documentary as being instrumental in pushing the debt and deficit to the forefront of the Canadian public agenda in the early 1990s.

Planning in the Public Affairs Bureau, who was also a member of the Progressive Conservative Party's communications committee at the same time. Other members included public relations representatives from affected departments, including Treasury, Labour and the Personnel Administration Office. The committee noted the anxiety within the population and a need for reassurance. "People are seeing change. They aren't seeing an integration into the whole. There's a lot of uncertainty. There is a need for an expression of hope and a vision – what will Alberta look like when we get to our destination" (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau. Good News Committee 1993). The committee was also looking for an opportunity for the premier to speak in public to provide that reassurance and considered the anniversary of the new government being sworn in as an optional date.

Precisely that sense of reassurance was provided on January 17th, 1994, when the premier appeared on a province-wide television broadcast on private network television to deliver a speech justifying and specifying the cuts in spending to key sectors of the public sector. The title of the address – *Building on the Alberta Advantage: Reaching the Destination Together* – reflects the committee's deliberations on the need for reassurance. One communications official who worked in both the Getty and Klein governments emphasized how the deliberations with the committee generated the idea for a television address, to which the Premier's Office was receptive, and contrasted this with the previous Getty government.

This group could come up with the idea that the premier go on television and present that idea. In the Getty era, it would have meandered through and it would have been too different at the end and it wouldn't have been picked up. You couldn't have persuaded Don Getty to do this either, it would have gotten bogged down. Whereas in the Klein era, we put a plan together, we brought Rod [Love] in the room and we said here's what we think we need to do. We would have said we've got to sell this stuff. We've got to make sure we've got lots of opportunities to tell people about what we're doing, and he would have said 'Okay, let's do it' (Interview 16).⁶¹

The broadcast was paid for by the government and aired on private network television, despite a long-standing policy of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to offer free airtime to politicians, subject only to the requirement that the opposition be granted equal time. By purchasing time on private networks, the government gained unfiltered access to the audience while the opposition had to be contented with comment through the news media.⁶²

The following day, January 18th, the reductions in grants to hospitals, social services agencies, municipalities and schools were announced. On January 24th, 335 layoffs were announced. On February 3rd, a government-appointed panel published a report recommending a mix of tax cuts and user fee increases. The entire campaign culminated on February 24th, when the 3rd quarter update, provincial budget and the departmental three-year business plans were unveiled.

⁶¹ The ineffectiveness of the Getty government's cabinet communications committee demonstrated in the previous chapter lends credence to this account.

⁶² The publicly financed television address became an annual fixture in Premier Klein's administration. The Progressive Conservative Association only paid the costs in the election years 1997, 2001 and 2005.

Unveiling the measures in the 1994 budget in a step-by-step fashion reflects a heightened sensitivity to news management tactics demonstrably absent from the Getty government. By introducing elements of the plan at sporadic intervals, it created a narrative that journalists could follow, complete with an introduction, conflict, climax and resolution. One broadcast reporter put it this way:

Klein understood something, which is that all reporters really want is a story and the budget cuts were a great story. There's something happening all the time and it wasn't just the budget cuts, there was stuff happening all the time, there was news galore. It was exciting and Klein was always at the front of it, he would talk to you whenever you wanted (Interview 4).

Moreover, by introducing news events at regular intervals, it prevented the news media from settling on any one negative repercussion from any of the measures that were introduced. By the time the ramifications of one policy announcement were made clear on the pages of a newspaper or on a television broadcast, the government was ready to move to the next stage. This was most evident in how the government released the third quarter update and the provincial budget at the same time. The committee planning the public relations campaign originally planned for both sets of documents to be released on two separate occasions, two weeks apart (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau. Good News Committee 1993, 5). However, they were eventually released together, on the same day, for two reasons. First, the fiscal picture was brightening substantially, undermining the claims of the severity of the situation. Since the second quarter update, revenue had increased and spending had decreased more than expected (Alberta Treasury 1994). Second, the departmental business plans contained a wide range of controversial

measures, including program cutbacks. By introducing all of them as a package on budget day, the probability that the news media could dedicate significant attention to any one issue was significantly reduced. One public relations official from the time referred to the strategy of providing overwhelming amounts of information to hide some pieces of information as “carpetbombing” (Interview 8).

Implementing the 1994 budget was a challenging task because it touched the lives of broad sectors of the population – public sector workers and consumers of public services such as hospitals and schools. While there was an appreciation within the electorate for the need to address the debt and deficit, there was also demonstrable support for continued public services.⁶³ The Klein government relied on the heavy use of symbols, news management tactics and advertising campaigns to sell the 1994 budget. Moreover, they created the impression of responsiveness by using consultation procedures that resonate with a long tradition of Alberta politics of non-partisan government. Public relations staff working closely with the elected level of government, however, closely managed these consultation procedures.

The second case is the provincial government’s public relations campaign designed to reduce support for the Kyoto Protocol to oppose it and to persuade the federal government from ratifying that treaty. In 2002, the House of Commons had to decide whether or not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The issue was of deep concern to the Alberta government which saw the treaty as a threat to the development of its oil and gas

⁶³ See the discussion about the results of the omnibus survey in Chapter 3.

industries. Unfortunately for the provincial government, public opinion data suggested that Albertans supported the ratification of the agreement.

Alberta released its own plan to deal with greenhouse gas emissions on May 21, 2002 and rejected the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on the grounds that it would have deleterious economic consequences and limited effect on the problem of climate change.

The Kyoto Protocol has little to do with the environment, and a lot to do with economics. It is more about transferring wealth from prosperous nations with good environmental records to fund developing nations that do not have to do anything to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Alberta Environment 2002a).

Beyond the rejection of the ratification of Kyoto, the most contentious policy in the province's draft action plan was a rejection of absolute targets for greenhouse gas emissions, in favour of reducing the *intensity* of greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2050. Intensity targets require emitters of greenhouse gases to reduce the proportion of gases released per unit of production, but allow absolute levels of greenhouse gases to rise. They tend to be supported by business groups, who do not want to jeopardize economic growth with absolute restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions, and opposed by environmental groups, because setting intensity targets does not necessarily reduce the absolute level of greenhouse gas emissions.

Following the release of the draft plan, the government selectively and strategically leaked details of a public opinion survey that had been conducted prior to the release of the draft plan. The information within was damaging to the government, in that it suggested a significant gap between public opinion and the government's position. For example, 72% of the poll's respondents supported the ratification of the accord.

Moreover, it suggested that 83% of respondents agreed with the position that human activity was at least partially responsible for climate change (36% agreed that it was the sole cause, 47% agreed that it was partially responsible, 17% agreed that climate change was strictly natural).⁶⁴ Despite this, the summary analysis of the poll added the respondents who agreed that human activity “partially caused” climate change with those who believe that climate change was strictly a natural phenomenon and headlined the page: “Two-thirds of respondents believe that climate change is at least partially naturally caused” (Ipsos Reid 2002, 4). Of course, the data could have been added together to get the result that two-thirds of respondents felt that climate change was at least “partially caused” by human activity. The poll also noted that 47% of respondents could not mention what commitments the Kyoto Protocol entailed (31% of respondents noted that it required Canada to reduce greenhouse gases and 5% were able to name the specific amount of necessary reductions). This perception of citizen ignorance served as the public justification for the government to launch a significant communications campaign to mobilize public opinion to its position against the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

Some details of the public opinion poll were leaked to the Calgary *Herald*, which published a news story on May 29th, 2002. The lead conceded that Albertans backed the ratification of Kyoto, but also emphasized the lack of knowledge of what Kyoto entailed. Beyond quoting an unnamed government source, the story also quoted the Director of Communications for Alberta Environment. The story read as follows:

⁶⁴ Ipsos-Reid conducted the telephone survey between April 18th-28th, 2002. The sample size was 1000 Albertans over 18 (Ipsos Reid 2002).

Val Mellesmoen, spokeswoman for Alberta Environment, said Tuesday the data show Albertans share the provincial government's desire to address global warming. However, she said Kyoto has become so associated with efforts to counter climate change, people begin to assume it's the only way to go. Mellesmoen said the concerns raised in the survey will be tackled head-on by Alberta's alternative plan. 'The bottom line is the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and that's what our plan does,' she said. 'We're going to achieve everything Albertans want and more – it just doesn't have to be under Kyoto (Olsen 2002a).'

The spokesperson's comments were shrewd and misleading, leaving the impression that the provincial government shared popular support for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and falsely suggesting that the government had introduced a plan that called for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, she was arousing opposition to an international treaty that would have committed Canada to an absolute reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. One week after the original leak, the government released the full details of the public opinion poll (Alberta Environment 2002b).

Next, during the fall of 2002, the provincial government launched a \$1.9 million print, radio and television advertising campaign ostensibly to inform the population about the Kyoto Protocol, its potential consequences and the government's position in regards to it. Four newspaper advertisements comprised the bulk of the advertising campaign (see Appendix C). In addition, the government developed a brochure that threatened Albertans with the potential negative side effects of the Kyoto Protocol, emphasizing increased gas and electricity prices and 450,000 lost jobs (Cryderman 2002). Although the advertising campaign was ostensibly strictly neutral and designed to inform Albertans about the government's draft plan and the consultation process, the combined emphasis

on the negative effects of the Kyoto Protocol combined with the reassurance of a positive and less damaging alternative were specifically designed to elicit particular responses by framing the issue in a particular way.

The concept of framing has a long history in social science research (Iyengar 1991; Kahneman and Tversky 2000). The concept is rooted in cognitive psychology and was originally designed to critique the dominant conception of individuals as utility-maximizing, self-interested actors. Instead, Kahneman and Tversky produced experimental evidence to suggest that affect, not just objective calculations of expected utility, influenced individual decisions. The early studies suggested that the same individuals (bringing with them their own personal preferences) react differently to policy proposals with identical outcomes depending on whether the proposals were framed in a way to emphasize the expected costs or the expected benefits. Iyengar (1991) used the concept of framing in experimental studies of the effects of news coverage that emphasized the same political issues but which were framed in ways that stressed the thematic, structural character or the episodic, narrow character of a news event. His study found evidence of a causal link between the framing of a news story and a subject's response to a related policy preference.

Entman (1993) provides one of the enduring definitions of what it means to frame a social issue. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (53). In the case of the Klein government's public relations campaign on the Kyoto

Protocol, the advertisements accept a particular definition of the problem (climate change) but emphasize a particular causal relationship (economic disruption) to create a particular moral evaluation (negative view of the Kyoto Protocol), while providing a policy response that shared the problem definition (climate change) but recommended a different treatment (“Made in Canada plan” for intensity targets) that avoided economic damages. The politically sensitive nature of the advertisements and the dubious nature of their claims are revealed by the fact that, originally, the government had planned to launch the campaign nation-wide to influence public opinion across the country. Focus groups suggested, however, that non-Alberta audiences would see the advertisements as selfish and a form of propaganda (Olsen 2002*b*)

That the government’s consultation process took place amidst this widespread advertising campaign raises questions about the worthiness of the process as an act of participatory democracy. According to the department’s spokesperson, the government explicitly rejected public meetings on the provincial plan and the Kyoto Accord because they “would just turn into a big free-for-all – environmentalists and critics coming out and using this as a media opportunity to criticize our position” (Cryderman 2002). Instead of public meetings, the government chose internet-based consultations with interested citizens and a round of stakeholder consultations. Even here, the government placed strict limitations on how responsive the government would be. The Minister of the Environment was clear: “We’re willing to change within the boundaries or the philosophy of the plan. We’re not willing to say, ‘We’re going to do Kyoto’” (Cryderman 2002).

Not surprisingly, the consultations with stakeholders revealed a deep political divide between industry and environmental groups. Industrial groups backed the provincial government's plan to reduce the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions because this approach was compatible with economic growth. Environmental groups such as the Alberta Environmental Network and the Clean Air Strategic Alliance opposed it precisely because it would allow absolute levels of greenhouse gas emissions to rise (Alberta Environment 2002c). The internet-based consultation process with individual citizens was also limited. There, the government also set the core principles around which the process should revolve, one of which was that Alberta's plan should ensure "compatibility" with the United States' interests (Bannister Research and Consulting Inc. 2002, 4). Moreover, the participation was limited and the participants' demographics hopelessly skewed – only 268 people took part and 75% of them were men (Bannister Research and Consulting Inc. 2002, 18).

The campaign culminated in the publication of a public opinion poll that ostensibly suggested that Albertans now backed the provincial government in its opposition to the Kyoto Protocol. On October 4th, 2002, the provincial government released the details of a public opinion survey which suggested that 72% of respondents opposed the ratification of the treaty, where the previous poll had suggested precisely the opposite sentiment among respondents. However, the design of the poll was highly questionable and suggests a willingness on the part of the Klein government to engage in manipulative behaviour. It was designed to solicit particular responses, namely, opposition to the

Kyoto Protocol. For example, it introduced the question on whether a respondent supported or opposed the treaty as follows:

As you may know, the United States has withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol and developing countries such as China, India and Mexico are currently exempt from meeting reduction targets under Kyoto. If Canada ratifies the Kyoto Protocol, some people say that Canada will be at an economic disadvantage because industry and investment will leave Canada for the U.S. and other countries where they will not have to incur the extra costs of meeting Kyoto Protocol reduction targets. Other people say Canada will NOT be at an economic disadvantage because technology will emerge that will allow companies in Canada to remain competitive (Office of the Premier 2002).

Respondents were then asked to state whether they agreed with either proposition; namely, that Canada would or would not be at an economic disadvantage because of the Kyoto Protocol. After asking this question, the survey asked whether or not respondents supported or opposed the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Not surprisingly, given that way the question was introduced with a factual statement emphasizing that the United States and others were not joining the treaty, 70% of respondents agreed that Canada would be at an economic disadvantage. Beginning the question about the economic consequences of the treaty by emphasizing the fact that developing countries and the United States were left out may have been an attempt to prime the respondents toward an answer that stresses the negative consequences. Furthermore, placing this question immediately prior to the question on support or opposition to the Kyoto Protocol has a

similar effect.⁶⁵ A respondent will have been primed to focus on the potentially deleterious economic consequences of the environmental treaty.

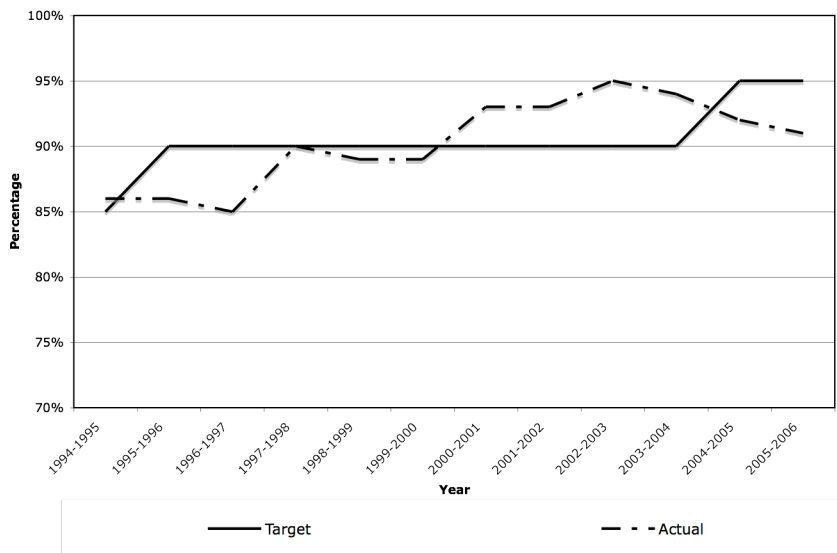
This entire series of events is an archetypal illustration of a public relations campaign to shape public opinion. First, there was evidence of some strategic manipulation of the presentation of results in the public opinion survey. The April 2002 survey results were reported to emphasize that two-thirds of respondents believed that climate change was at least partly caused by nature, which aided the government's case, even though the same data could be interpreted to read that two-thirds of respondents believed that climate change was caused by human activity. Moreover, the question design and ordering of the follow-up public opinion survey in October was designed in such a way so as to create a bias towards answers opposed to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Second, there was selective and strategic leaking of those same public opinion survey results to the *Calgary Herald*. Third, the way the departmental director of communications responded in the news story displayed evidence of how she saw her role as a nominal civil servant supposedly dedicated to providing information to the public. She preferred to deliver vague reassurances that bordered on fallacy. Fourth, the consultations were heavily individualized, hopelessly biased in terms of their demographics and limited in the range of acceptable decisions the government would consider. Moreover, it took place in a situation where the major decision at hand (whether Canada should ratify the Kyoto

⁶⁵ Zaller and Feldman (1992) have demonstrated the strong impact that question design and order can have on survey responses. In electoral politics, manipulations of this kind are called "push polls" designed to elicit a certain response, rather than ascertain an attitude or behaviour.

Protocol) had already been decided. Core principles were established at the outset to ensure a particular path, namely, that the Kyoto Protocol be rejected.

To take the Klein government at its word, reforms to government public relations were meant to improve communication with Albertans. Evidence suggests, however, that this goal has not been met. Early in Premier Klein's administration, government departments developed performance indicators and goals for different aspects of their functions. One of the Public Affairs Bureau's performance indicators is a measurement of the satisfaction of government clients. Departmental directors of communication were asked to forward a list of government clients to a private-sector survey firm, who then questioned a sample of those clients as to whether or not they were satisfied with the work provided by the central agency. Historically, the results have been very good: the lowest proportion of respondents who were satisfied with the PAB's services was 86% in 1994; the highest was 95%. The Public Affairs Bureau met or surpassed its target in five out of 12 years and came very close in all other years (see Figure 4-1).

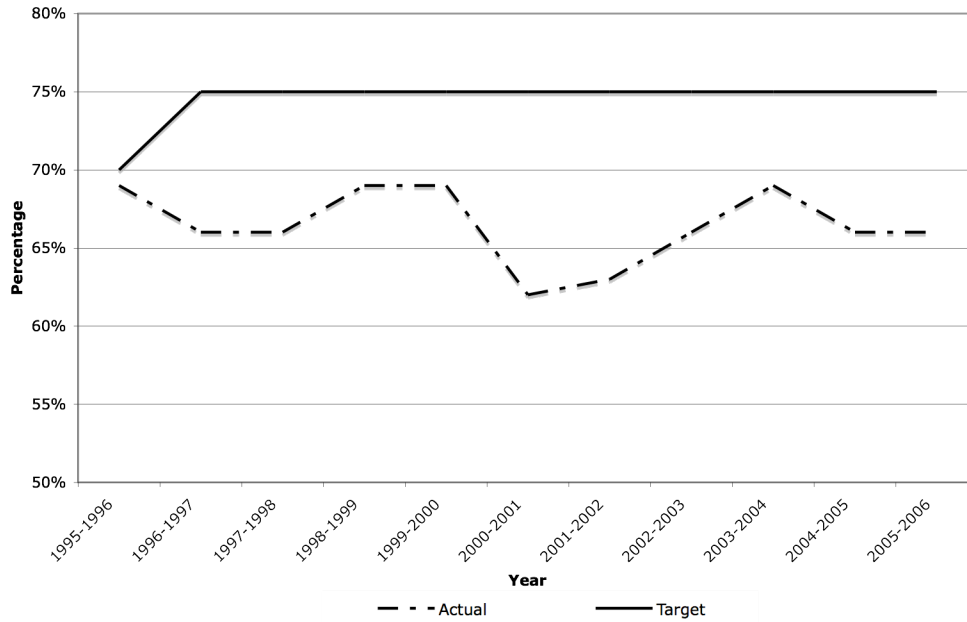
Figure 4-1: Government Client Satisfaction With Services Provided By The Public Affairs Bureau



Source: Alberta Public Affairs Bureau Annual Reports (1994-2006)

However, two other performance indicators meant to measure the public’s satisfaction with the quality of government information reveal a very different story. The first indicator was introduced in 1994 and was compiled from a public opinion survey wherein respondents were asked for their views on the quality, accessibility, timeliness and usefulness of government information (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1995, 13). In this regard, the Public Affairs Bureau has not once met its performance targets. Its highest achievement was a positive response rate of 69% in 1995-1996, when the target was 70%; its lowest achievement was a positive response of 62% 2000-2001.

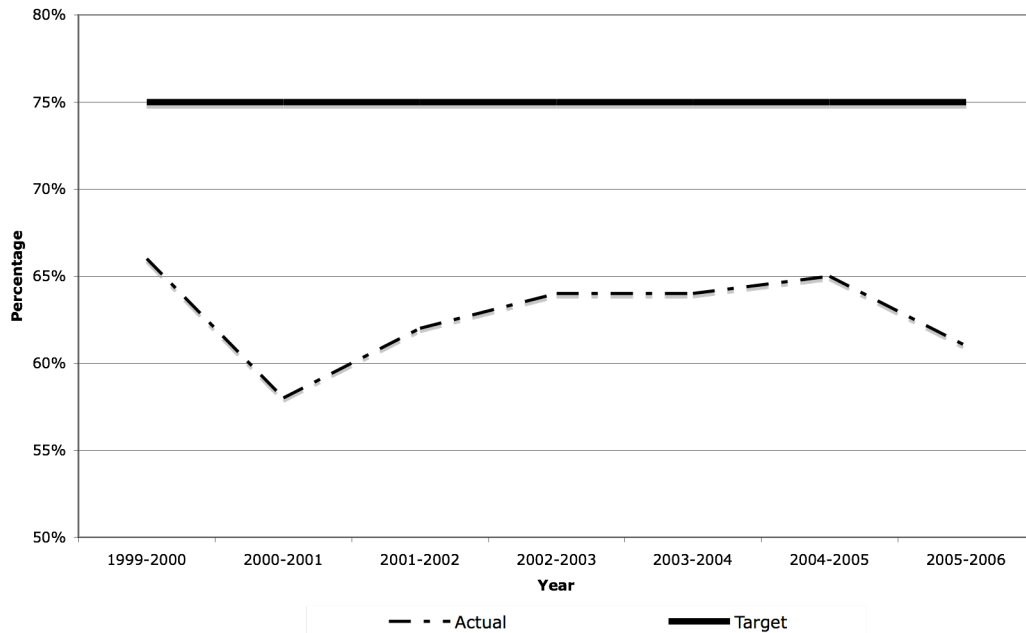
Figure 4-2: Public Satisfaction With Government Information



Source: Alberta Public Affairs Bureau Annual Reports (1995-2006)

In 1999, a second performance indicator was added to measure the public's satisfaction with government communication in priority policy areas, such as health care and education (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 2000, 9). The results for this indicator were almost identical to the first. The target of 75% of respondents being satisfied with government information has not been met once.

Figure 4-3: Public Satisfaction With Government Information In Priority Areas



Source: Alberta Public Affairs Bureau Annual Reports (1994-2006)

The performance indicators for the Public Affairs Bureau suggest that the services provided to government clients are exemplary, but this is perhaps not surprising. The Klein government transformed the mandate of the PAB to emphasize strategic public relations advice at the expense of bureaucratic, technical and creative services. By contrast, these data suggest that survey respondents are nowhere near as impressed by the communications and public relations work as are government clients. It is perhaps open to interpretation whether it is realistic to expect more than 65% of survey respondents in any environment to be satisfied with the timeliness, quality and accessibility of government information. However, it is also true that the government of Alberta has set its own targets in this regard and has never met them once.

Instead, the most immediate consequence of the Klein government's reforms was to perpetuate the Progressive Conservative dynasty in the wake of its most serious crisis. Prior to the 1993 election, the party was implicated not just as responsible for the budget deficit and business failures such as Novatel, but it was also implicated in a general sense of alienation from citizens. By reforming public relations practices, the Klein government was simultaneously able to implement its chosen solution to the problem of the budget deficit (substantial spending reductions in core public services) without jeopardizing its chances for re-election. It did this by constructing a narrative about out-of-control spending, despite the existence of an alternative, plausible narrative, namely, that the Getty government had restrained expenditures and that the budget deficit was due to collapsing revenues. Establishing this narrative served two goals. First, emphasizing out-of-control spending logically provides its own response – to reduce public spending. Second, it differentiated the Klein government from its unpopular predecessor – in effect, allowing the Progressive Conservatives to run against themselves.

The second consequence was to provide the government with a greater ability to influence journalists. Early on, this worked by elevating the importance of public relations staff within government and by making their experience in news management available to ministers. However, later, this was aided by important transformations in the Alberta news media system that exacerbated the consequences of the Klein government's public relations reforms. Those reforms were made in the context of a difficult relationship between the new government and important news media outlets, particularly the CBC and the *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald*. After 1995, however, the

media landscape was very different. In 1995, just before Hollinger Corp. increased its share of Southam News to 50%, the publisher of the Calgary *Herald* resigned, citing his opposition to increased central control by the national chain as one reason for his departure (Boras 1995). He had worked for the Calgary *Herald* as a journalist since 1969 and summarized his vision of journalism in this way:

If you look back a generation ago, newspapers thought all the news that is fit to print meant they should cast criticism over everyone, no matter how much power they had. Over the past 10 to 15 years, it has moved to becoming about marketing partnerships and you don't cast nearly as critical an eye over your marketing partners. The dispute going on now is really about the *New York Times*' motto of 'all the news that is fit to print' and marketing partners and their role in a newspaper (Craig 1999).

His successor was Ken King, who had never been a journalist but had built a career in newspaper advertising (Craig 1999). King's tenure as publisher was highly controversial, in part because he had a reputation for being very close to Calgary elites, including the premier. For example, in one incident, a *Herald* reporter phoned the office of Klein's chief of staff only to have King answer the phone.⁶⁶ King instituted a very different philosophy of journalism, summarized by his successor in a newspaper column during the 2000 journalists' strike.

⁶⁶ King confirmed the anecdote in a news story (Craig 1999) and expressed regret that it had happened.

The first was a change in news coverage. The acronym that crystallized this goal was F.A.B (Fairness, Accuracy and Balance).⁶⁷ You will note that nowhere in this formula is there a place for advocacy. Advocacy is not the role of news stories. We believe we should present events as they happen -- fairly and with a balance of views. It became clear to me that many, certainly not all, of the journalists involved in this dispute were resisting this effort.

The second theme involved the newspaper's editorial and opinion voice. Here, we sought to more accurately reflect the values of Calgary within a balanced approach that includes a variety of contributors spanning the ideological spectrum. Our voice, though - the voice we express in our own editorials - reflects and supports a free market approach, fiscal responsibility, and the strong entrepreneurial spirit that is so much a part of Calgary (Gaynor 2000).

A newspaper article in the *Globe and Mail* explained the changes as follows: “In practical terms, this often means ensuring that both sides of an issue are represented within a news report's first four or five paragraphs. Before Mr. King became publisher, the issue would often be stated at the beginning, with the response in the bottom half of the story, which is common practice at many papers” (Craig 1999).

The newsroom did not welcome the changes under King warmly. There were public accusations that management had put pressure on journalists to revise news coverage to be more sensitive to local and provincial elites and shift news coverage to the right. In 1998, the newspaper's journalists and editors joined a union and, after failing to get a first collective agreement, went on strike in 2000. Relying on replacement workers, the

⁶⁷ The Premier's Chief of Staff expressed precisely the same vision of journalism. “We asked three things of every media outlet in Alberta, print, radio or television: fairness, accuracy and balance (Interview with Rod Love).” The phrase is strikingly similar to the phrase used by Fox News to describe its style of news coverage – “Fair and Balanced.”

management was able to continue publishing the newspaper during the strike that ended later that year. The union was subsequently decertified.

A second major shift in ownership occurred in 2000 when the television and broadcast network CanWest purchased the bulk of Southam's newspapers from Hollinger. This transaction led to a substantial increase in the concentration of media ownership in major Canadian centers. In Edmonton and Calgary, CanWest became the owner of the major daily newspaper and leading television stations. The consequences of this change in ownership were more visible at the Edmonton *Journal*. In 2003, Giles Gherson was appointed editor-in-chief of the newspaper and distanced it from any lingering connection to the days when the paper could have been considered an opposition newspaper.⁶⁸ "The *Journal* went through a period certainly under Giles Gherson when the brakes were put on the notion that it was an official opposition. He wanted nothing to do with that" (Interview 19). Reflecting this, in 2002, he arranged to have the Calgary *Herald's* legislature bureau chief, Tom Olsen, simultaneously serve in the same position at the Edmonton *Journal*. Olsen, who joined the Legislature Press Gallery in the wake of the Calgary *Herald* strike, had close ties to the Klein government – his brother was the Director of the Premier's southern Alberta Office.⁶⁹ Gherson's editorship represents a particular period in the history of the Edmonton *Journal*, one where the paper departed

⁶⁸ Gherson's career path is more testimony to the contemporary blurred lines between journalism and public relations. He started as a journalist with Southam News and later joined the political staff of Liberal Human Resources Development Minister Lloyd Axworthy from 1993-1997 (Greenspon and Wilson-Smith 1997). After leaving the Edmonton *Journal*, he joined the *Globe and Mail* as their business editor, only to leave that paper to be the Editor-in-Chief of the Toronto *Star*. In April 2007, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed him to be Deputy Minister and Associate Secretary to the Cabinet for Communications at the Government of Ontario.

⁶⁹ Olsen later joined the Press Office of Premier Klein's successor.

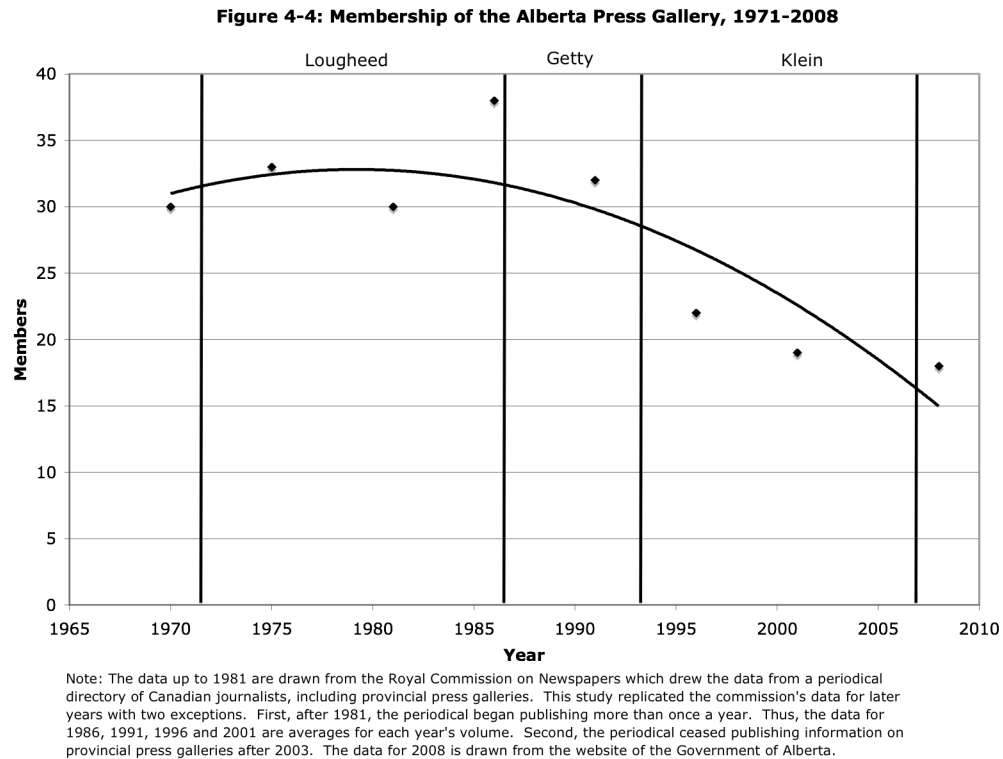
from its previous independent and non-partisan stance to take a very supportive role vis-à-vis the government.

At the same time, through the 1990s, there was a widespread trend within all news media outlets to reduce the resources dedicated to covering provincial politics. One print journalist noted, “The biggest problem is the lack of resources. There are no *Sun* columnists, no *Herald* columnists, the *Journal* column is being written by an entertainment reporter. Previously, the *Journal* had three experienced journalists and replaced them with novices. That trend really started under Giles Gherson when he made Tom Olsen bureau chief for the Edmonton *Journal*” (Interview 3). A print journalist noted that the concentration of ownership and the reduction in resources led to less competition between news stories.

Since the Getty years, the major shift has been the sharing of stories between the Calgary and Edmonton papers, that’s had a major impact. When I first started the *Journal* and *Herald* both at least had twice the size bureaus they have now and they were both competitive. We treated each other like competition. The *Sun* papers did as well. Slowly over time they’ve become one bureau. We see the lists of stories that the other paper is working on and they do the same. With broadcast, the bureaus have shrunk, so there’s less competition (Interview 19).

Figure 4-4 displays the decline in membership of the Alberta Press Gallery. There is a clear trend to a dramatic decline in membership starting in 1996, after the major budget cuts had been implemented. After that major public policy issue was resolved and new ownership had taken over at both the Calgary *Herald* and the Edmonton *Journal*, the provincial legislature became much less “newsworthy”, making life easier for a

government with a more politicized and more centralized public relations staff than previous administrations.

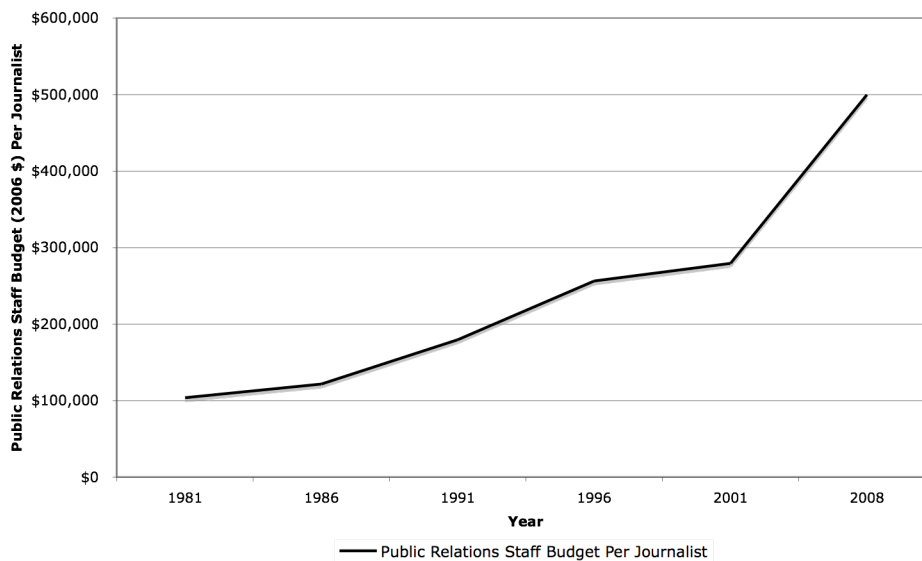


Source: Royal Commission on Newspapers and Fletcher and Canada Corporate News

By 2004, the situation had become such that an article examining the changing nature of news coverage at the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* quoted a government public relations official as saying, “The quality of journalism in this province is ridiculous. It’s so sad. There’s no continuity, no institutional memory. We used to worry about what the *Journal* had in the paper every morning. We don’t worry about the *Journal* any more. We don’t worry about any media” (quoted in Gregoire 2004, 44).

At the same time as media have been withdrawing resources from the legislature, the Klein government has expanded the public relations staff seconded to departments to a level never seen before under Getty and Lougheed (see Figure B-3). This has resulted in far more resources being dedicated to public relations staff than to journalists covering provincial politics. This trend is evident in Figure 4-5.

Figure 4-5: Public Relations Resources Per Journalist



Source: *Canadian Corporate News* (1986-2001); *Government of Alberta*; *Public Accounts* (1981-2008)

A third consequence of the reforms was to have public relations staff take on some of the functions that are normally played by political parties and party systems. While the Klein government made much of its commitment to consultation and participation, almost all of its reforms were controlled by the politicized public relations staff. Public consultations were often held when core decisions were already made or they were individualized forms of input in the form of Internet or mail-back surveys. Moreover, in the case of the consultations about the Kyoto Protocol, they took place in the middle of a

government advertising campaign that selectively – if not deceptively – stressed particular aspects of the debate about the treaty.

Some, including representatives of the Klein government, and representatives of the public relations profession in general, might herald these developments as positive examples of interactions between citizens and governments. This is flawed for several reasons. First, many of these processes occur behind closed doors with no checks on how they are conducted. Second, the close relationship with the political level of government means that civil servants will have strong incentives and temptations to provide public relations services with an eye to the electoral success of their superiors, not to any benign form of democratic participation or administrative imperative. The manipulation of polling data in the Kyoto Protocol is a shining example of this trend (see page 180). Third, this participation is often individualized, atomized and reduces political participation to answering survey questions in a public opinion poll, participating in a focus group, or mailing back a voluntary survey. Finally, most importantly, these processes are strictly consultative, the majority government, facing minimal legislative opposition, can pick and choose which proposals are adopted or rejected with a minimal fear of rejection in an election.

There is a revealing contrast between the rise of these supposedly participatory measures and the dramatically declining turnout in elections during Premier Klein's tenure. While voter turnout in Alberta has historically been lower than every other province, it peaked in 1993, due to the competitive election, and then declined, reaching 44% and 41% in the two most recent provincial elections. The Progressive

Conservative party, while strong in the sense that it continually wins elections, is, at the same time, enduring a steadily weakening relationship with the electorate. During Premier Getty's tenure, this weakened relationship put the ability of the party to win elections in jeopardy. The solution, in Premier Klein's eyes, was to use the resource of the public relations bureaucracy to fulfill the role that strong parties often play, linking citizens with the state. This, in effect, allows the Progressive Conservatives to win elections without relying on a particularly strong or wide base of support within the electorate.

Underhill once observed that that the press and the party system are the two most important links between the state, at the center, and the citizens at the periphery (1955, 33). The evidence presented here suggests that public relations practices are influencing, if not dominating, these two institutions. There are doubtless those within the Klein government and the public relations profession who herald this as genuinely democratic interaction. This dissertation, however, suggests otherwise.

4.5 Conclusion

Documentary evidence suggests that both the bureaucracy and the elected level of government were interested in changing the way the new government used public relations (Kowalski 1992; Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1992). Moreover, Premier Klein and his two Deputy Premiers, Elzinga and Kowalski, were all members of Premier Getty's cabinet communications committee and personally familiar with its limitations. Klein and Elzinga were also both members of the communications task force that Premier

Getty had instructed to make recommendations for reform so both Klein and Elzinga were familiar with the debates and proposals for reform in that forum. Given their personal experience with the ineffectiveness of the cabinet communications committee and the debates of the Communications Task Force, Premier Klein's decision to abolish the committee and assign the Public Affairs Bureau first to his Deputy Premier and shortly thereafter to himself has the appearance of a definitive response to an ongoing problem.

While the budgets for government advertising and the Public Affairs Bureau were initially cut, making the Premier's Office responsible for the Public Affairs Bureau increased the capacity of the center to coordinate all government public relations activities. At the same time, it contributed to a wider politicization of the public relations staff within the bureaucracy, shrinking the space between the civil service and the political level. For example, the Press Office became an important station in the career paths of public relations professionals; the space between the Premier's Office and departmental public relations staff was eliminated through daily meetings in the legislative session; and, the Premier's Office insisted (successfully, in contrast to the Getty government) that directors of communication sit on the departmental executive committees, with easy access to the minister and the deputy minister. In later years, ministers became more involved in the hiring process. Partly as a result of this and partly as a result of the close day-to-day working contact between directors of communication and ministers, strategic pairs were formed in many cases between the two, moving from portfolio to portfolio, which had never happened in the Getty government.

At the same time, the mandate of the Public Affairs Bureau was gradually changed from being a full-service communications agency that could support a wide range of departmental communications work to a strategic public relations consultancy for the Government of Alberta, closely linked to the Office of the Premier and the Alberta Executive Council. In 1994-1995, the public relations human resources of the Public Affairs Bureau made up 45% of its annual budget while the branch that provided technical and administrative communications expertise in the field of advertising, printing and graphic design made up 47%. By 2004-2005, this proportion was substantially different; the former tasks comprised almost 59% of the agency's budget and the latter 34%. All these reforms enabled the government to launch a number of public relations campaigns on politically contentious issues, which the Getty government was unable to accomplish.

This thesis introduced a model of incentives and opportunities to try to explain why political actors adopt these kinds of public relations strategies. Table 7 lists the variables introduced in the model of incentives and opportunities, introduced in chapter one. Although every variable that, according to the model, creates incentives to adopt public relations strategies, this research suggests that some were more relevant than others. The most significant factors were the volatile electorate, the threat to reelection (that lasted up until the 1997 election), the policy of fiscal retrenchment and the confrontational relationship with a wide variety of media outlets. At the same time, the model is not entirely sufficient to explain the changes observed in this case. Interview subjects often pointed to the particular individual characteristics of Premier Klein and, to a lesser extent,

his assistant Rod Love, as being instrumental in changing the government public relations practices. Klein was, after all, a journalist and a public relations professional before he became a politician (Martin 2002). One print journalist recalled Klein's career as follows: "The main difference between Getty and Klein is that Klein was himself a media guy. He and his sidekick, Rod Love, made their careers out of working the media, whereas Don Getty didn't really understand the media" (Interview 18). A senior public relations official in the Getty government agreed: "They [Klein and Love] saw Klein as the great communicator" (Interview 5). At the same time, as influential as Klein and Love were, their personal characteristics cannot account for the broader discussions about the failures of government public relations under Premier Getty's government, which created a wider consensus within the government of Alberta that changes were necessary.

Table 7: Model of Incentives and Opportunities Under Premier Klein

Condition	Measure	Hypothesized Relationship To Strategic Interventions Via Public Relations	Evidence
Institutional Configuration			
Type of Democracy	Majoritarian or Consensus-Based	In majoritarian systems, heads of government must accept blame and take credit by virtue of their place at the head of a unified government, requiring public relations strategies to manage these public perceptions.	-Strongly personalized approach to politics
Party System	Party Strength (Turnout)	As turnout declines, governments become less secure about having a reliable electoral base which will support them, requiring public relations strategies to maintain electoral support.	-low turnout, although limited evidence this fact jeopardized the government's reelection chances in 1993
	Level of Competition	As electoral defeat becomes increasingly possible, politicians can no longer discount public opinion to pursue their policy objectives and require public relations strategies to accomplish policy goals and secure reelection.	-strong threat to Premier Klein's reelection in 1993 and, to a lesser extent, in 1997.
Media System	Independence of Press	As the independence of the press increases, politicians lose personal relationships and contacts with owners, managers and journalists, contributing to a greater willingness to publish critical news, requiring governments to adopt more sophisticated public relations strategies to manage the news.	Strong links between some selected journalists and the premier, limited personal relationships with others.
	Predominance of Television	An influential television media sector contributes to greater competition in the news media, shortens soundbites, and elevates the importance of visual components of news, all requiring politicians to make use of professional public relations.	Television and contributed changed newspaper coverage, contributed to more critical news stories
Issue-specific conflict configurations			
	Loss imposition or prosperity	When governments seek to impose losses on electorally important constituencies, they risk electoral sanction or defeat and rely on public relations strategies to insulate themselves.	Provincial government knew about the paradox of managing retrenchment and reelection (1991 survey), most important issue was the budget cuts in 1994
	Do issues draw on traditions of political culture?	When politicians face agendas composed of issues that can be plausibly linked to traditions within political culture, aggressive public relations strategies are unnecessary because citizens are more likely to see their interests align with the government's.	-no constitutional issues or other issues that touched on traditions within Alberta political culture until much later in Premier Klein's administration.

The reforms introduced by Klein helped to rescue the Progressive Conservative regime from the threat of electoral defeat. Much later, and perhaps more distressing, these reforms began to play many of the roles in engaging citizens that political parties have historically performed. In this sense, Alberta's party system, historically a "no party system," evolved from its one period of genuine electoral competition to a public relations state.

Chapter 5: The Public Relations State In Alberta

This dissertation took as its starting point the observation that there was a form of public allegation against the Klein government's public relations activities but that this allegation had never been placed in a sufficiently comparative context, either spatial or historical. The within-case historical comparison of the evolution of the government of Alberta's public relations activities was meant to remedy this deficiency.

Chapter one addressed four broad normative approaches to the study of government public relations. Elite theories see public relations as necessary to manufacturing the consent of the governed to maintain stable government, making only the barest concessions to citizen rule. This approach was questioned on the grounds that it often mistakes oligarchic rule for benevolent rule. Participatory democrats, however, have historically emphasized the potential for public relations practices, such as focus groups and public opinion surveys, to integrate citizen views into the democratic process. This approach is flawed because empirical evidence suggests that governments use these techniques to strengthen their case in public and to win popular support to their side. Moreover, it assumes fixed preferences on the part of citizens; most theorists of participatory democracy reject this assumption in favour of processes of citizen deliberation and negotiation. Instead, this thesis found administrative justifications for government public relations more plausible. That is to say, there is a space for the use of public relations activities such as advertising, public opinion research and news

management strategies in pursuing particular policy goals, particularly when other mechanisms, such as providing incentives or regulation, fail.

Based on *prima facie* observations from other jurisdictions and existing literature I argued that the existing concerns about government public relations focus on three distinct trends: the expansion of public relations resources, the centralization of those resources within the administrative apparatus of the state and the politicization of those resources. In Alberta, although the budgets for advertising and the Public Affairs Bureau were highest under Premiers Lougheed and Getty, the political consequences of this expansion were limited. First, the Public Affairs Bureau's budget was overwhelmingly dedicated to creative, technical and bureaucratic services. Second, although public relations were assigned to a central agency, that agency often lacked authority within government to fulfill its function. Third, there was a commitment to a distinct space for civil service communications, separate from the political level. Under Premier Klein, this changed substantially. Although budgets for advertising and the Public Affairs Bureau dropped, the character of government public relations changed dramatically. Making the Public Affairs Bureau responsible to the premier increased its authority within government and contributed to its political character. Departmental directors worked much more closely with the Premier's Office and with their ministers, moving with them from portfolio to portfolio. Moreover, although the overall budget of the PAB was reduced, most of those reductions occurred at the expense of technical, creative and bureaucratic services; by contrast, the public relations staff component suffered mild reductions during Klein's first term and ultimately was expanded substantially, to a level

not seen before under Premiers Getty or Lougheed. At the same time, the government was aided by shifts in ownership in the media industries and a withdrawal of journalists from the press gallery.

In order to explain this evolution, chapter one introduced a model of opportunities and incentives that seeks to explain the conditions under which governments are likely to adopt public relations strategies. This model suggests that the particular combinations of political institutions and issue-specific conflict configurations create conditions more or less favourable to the use of public relations strategies to shape public opinion. The relevant institutional variables are the electoral system, the strength of political parties, the level of partisan competition, the independence of the news media and the dominance of television over newspapers. Two hypotheses regarding issue-specific conflict configurations were put forward; first, that politicians would pursue public relations strategies when required to impose losses, and second, that they would do the same when they lack cannot tap into deep streams of political culture as a political resource.

The model helped to explain the evolution of government public relations at all three stages. Very few of the conditions that create incentives for public relations were present during Premier Lougheed's tenure. Similarly, all of the conditions that create incentives were present during Premier Klein's government. The curious case is Premier Getty, who also faced a political environment with all variables suggesting a strong incentive to adopt public relations strategies and yet Getty never pursued this. There is empirical evidence to suggest that the government was aware of many of the conditions in the model creating an incentive to adopt public relations tactics such as a volatile electorate,

partisan competition, the difficulties of retrenchment and a confrontational relationship with the news media. Not surprisingly, there were those within the government who made precisely this recommendation. Nevertheless, Getty failed to do this and this arguably helps account for his political difficulties. There are two reasons for why Getty did not do what those around him were advocating. First, Getty as an individual appears not to have been as “intuitive” as either Premier Lougheed or Klein, in the words of one public relations official who worked in both Lougheed’s and Getty’s government (Interview 1). Other interview subjects were kinder, suggesting that Getty, as an athlete in the 1950s and a politician in the 1970s, was simply not prepared to deal with the transformed, more independent, more confrontational attitudes within the news media that developed in the 1980s (Interview 4). A second reason is that Getty was closely allied to Premier Lougheed, familiar with how he had governed and relied on some of the same senior staff people to manage his office. In short, Getty simply carried on “business as usual” without recognizing that conditions around him had changed dramatically.

Some of the conditions were more important than others in creating incentives for the Getty and Klein governments to adopt more extensive and aggressive public relations strategies. The clearest causes were in the party system and the fiscal crisis. One must start with the 1986 drop in oil prices and the subsequent economic challenges caused substantial problems for the government, including budget deficits, increased unemployment and budget deficits. However, political developments were instrumental in magnifying the consequences of this economic development. For example, Premier Getty took power in November 1985 and oil prices began falling quickly thereafter.

However, the opposition parties were able to increase their representation substantially in the March 1986 election, before the full consequences of the drop in oil prices could be experienced. This increased opposition can only partially be attributed to the drop in oil prices. In part, this increased opposition was a response to Getty's singular lack of charisma and gaffes as well as divisions within the Progressive Conservatives, lingering from a divisive leadership campaign. At the same time, the Alberta NDP had been steadily increasing in popularity through the 1970s, winning 19% of the vote in 1982. The party was also able to capitalize on a certain degree of sympathy from the population because the party's previous, long-time leader had died in an accident in 1984 (Pratt 1986). Finally, the Alberta Liberals profited from the fact that the national Liberal party had moved from government to opposition in 1984. The presence of the 16-seat NDP and the 4-seat Liberal Party magnified the later consequences of budget deficits, business failures, tax increases and constitutional turmoil. Similarly, the Premier's defeat in the 1989 general election in his own constituency came close to turning the lukewarm feelings of party activists toward Getty into open hostility. That election result was a direct catalyst within government for discussions about new forms of government public relations, including the establishment of the cabinet communications committee and the adoption of a "bunker" mentality by the Premier's Office.

The historically low turnout in Alberta, which reflects the counter-intuitively "weak" nature of the provincial Progressive Conservatives (weak in the sense of having limited links to the electorate, although certainly not weak in their capacity to win legislative majorities) and the majoritarian political system are background contextual variables,

present throughout the entire era. Both created conditions favourable for aggressive public relations strategies.

According to the best available evidence, we can plausibly infer that Alberta's news media landscape was comparatively television-heavy during the Lougheed administration and that this increased over time. This partly explains the major public relations tactic that the Lougheed government adopted; namely, periodic appearances by the premier on television. There is a correlation between the rise of television's influence in the national market and the increased importance of public relations strategies in Alberta politics. However, nothing in the historical record, documentary and interview-based evidence suggested this was only a mildly influential transformation during the Getty and Klein governments. It did give print journalists one more reason to write critical news stories of Getty, on the grounds that newspapers had to differentiate their coverage from television. Instead, the addition of two new free market-oriented and populist tabloid newspapers in Edmonton and Calgary and the increased independence and non-partisanship at the end of Premier Lougheed's administration appear to have been more influential in creating conditions for a more confrontational relationship with the provincial government, which Premier Getty's government failed to appreciate.

Finally there are two ways in which the model failed to explain the facts at hand. First, it disregards the influence of personal leadership traits and there is some evidence that the personal traits of each of the three premiers did matter at each point in time. Lougheed preferred to exercise a great deal of influence over the policy process and his interventions on television helped to complete a personalized image of his government.

Getty did not want cabinet ministers bound by cabinet committees and this hampered his government's ability to influence departmental public relations strategies. Similarly, his personal awkwardness with the news media generated significant negative coverage. By contrast, Premier Klein was a former journalist and public relations professional and had the skills to carry a public relations strategy predicated on aggressive interventions in the public sphere.

Nevertheless, while these traits were important, they cannot account for the remarkable documentary evidence available that suggests that government actors beyond each premier were just as aware of the need to adopt public relations strategies. For instance, if it was just the case that a government's public relations activities were strictly a result of what the head of government desired, it would have been highly unlikely that the Public Affairs Bureau would have prepared a wind-ranging document suggesting reforms just three days after Ralph Klein won the leadership of the party.

Also, and this is perhaps a more serious indictment of the potential for Kriesi's model of incentives and opportunities to account for government public relations strategies: it ignores history and the weight of past practices in shaping outcomes. For example, if we consider the Klein government at two different stages in its administration, the first half and the second half, the levels of each condition within the model is very different. Party competition was high, the government was pursuing a policy of retrenchment and the government lacked themes that capitalized on currents within Alberta political culture. However, during the second half of the Klein's administration, party competition had been reduced almost completely, the retrenchment agenda was exhausted and public

expenditures had climbed, and issues such as the Kyoto Protocol and health care reform had enabled the premier to once again pursue political conflicts with a federal, Liberal government. The model would predict two very different kinds of government public relations strategies in these two situations, and yet, the Klein government was constantly pursued political public relations strategies through the life of its administration. If a researcher had randomly picked the second half of Premier Klein's administration to evaluate Kriesi's model, the model would not have seemed very useful.

The reason that the Klein government pursued political public relations strategies even after conditions had substantially changed is that the 1992-1993 reforms were so substantial that they are not the sort that can be "dialed back" or undone. But recognizing this fact requires a *serious* modification to using models of political opportunity structures to examine why and whether government's "go public" with public relations strategies. That serious modification is that while politicians do take account of the opportunity structure of their environment (and this dissertation has presented evidence to that effect), they also act in ways that are influenced by past decisions. This also helps to explain why Getty failed to adapt to the changing political environment; he had adapted the personal staff and the institutional design of the government public relations bureaucracy to carry on into his administration. They brought with them their own hesitancy and inability to launch significant interventions into the public sphere to shape public opinion.

While Premier Klein's reforms certainly perpetuated one-party rule in Alberta, it is unlikely that other provincial governments who adopt similar public relations strategies

will be able to reap the same rewards. Every other jurisdiction in Canada has a functional party system that features competitive elections, political parties with stronger bases in the electorate, higher turnout and changes in government. The most sophisticated public relations machines will not be able to overcome the attacks of stronger opposition parties, the presence of plausible alternatives for government and the life cycle of elected governments. Alberta, by contrast, only briefly had a competitive party system: from 1986-1993. However, neither of the opposition parties was able to sufficiently establish themselves during this unique historical period and Premier Klein's public relations reforms rescued his party from the threat of partisan competition.

However, two other consequences may be more generally seen in other jurisdictions: a transformed news production process and the increased importance of political marketing in political party systems. Regarding the first, the rise of the public relations state makes it harder for the news media to produce high-quality, independent news about the political process. Even the widespread passage of access-to-information legislation in most western jurisdictions creates a corresponding demand for politically sensitive public relations professionals to minimize the consequences of those very laws. Beyond this, the rise of the public relations state has a constraining effect on political discourse as public relations officials closely connected to politicians prepare carefully crafted messages for the news media. Political discourse is reduced to competing "talking points." Moreover, it is possible that the rise of manipulative news management strategies and broader public relations strategies causes an increase in news reporting about politics that emphasizes the cynical and strategic aspects of politics. For example,

Esser, Reineman and Fan (2000) conducted a content analysis of German and British newspaper election coverage and found that British newspapers dedicated between two and three times more coverage to party “spin doctoring” activities than did German newspapers. The difference is accounted for by the fact that German campaigns had not yet adopted the news management practices that the UK Labour Party had. In a later study (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001), the authors argued that the rise in political spin necessitated a new form of election coverage – metacoverage. That is to say, the increased manipulative activities of political parties force the news media to dedicate coverage to how political parties manipulate the news and how the news cover the campaigns. An independent inquiry into government communications in the United Kingdom identified this pattern in its report.

We were told that three major factors have contributed to the breakdown in the relationship between government, the media and the public: the communications strategy adopted by the Labour administration on coming into power in 1997; the reaction of the media and the press in particular to that; and the response of the Civil Service to the new demands that were placed on it (United Kingdom 2003, 7).

Those who work on behalf of politicians often claim that they resort to such tactics because journalists would rather report on salacious, irrelevant and back-room aspects of politics. They claim that leaking, spinning and manipulating the news media is necessary in order to get through the media filter (Kinsella 2001). Whether the cause is journalists’ desire to report on strategic aspects of politics, or politicians increasing attempts to manipulate the news, the consequence is the same – an arms race of manipulation and

cynical reporting on politics. Political discourse and democratic practice are the only victims.

Second, the governments' increased public relations activities contribute to the rise of a self-referential class of media elites, divorced from the electorate. The self-referential class is composed of professionals who cycle in and out of various positions within the news media, the government and political campaigns. Colin Crouch describes the contemporary rise of political marketing in both government and opposition political parties as symptomatic of a "post-democracy," by which he means a political process that includes all the gains made in democratic practice through the 20th century but which is also seriously handicapped by important social trends. In his eyes, the rise of the media class within political parties and government is one of those trends that prevent citizens from exercising influence over their rulers. Similarly, in his examination of the principles of representative democracy, Manin identifies the new phenomenon of "audience democracy," dominated by media and public relations professionals. "Elections continue to elevate to office individuals who possess distinctive features; they retain the elitist character they have always had. However, a new elite of experts in communication has replaced the political activist and the party bureaucrat. Audience democracy is the rule of the media expert" (Manin 1997, 220). Finally, Cook, argues that as press secretaries and public relations professionals multiply to handle the demands of dealing with the news media on behalf of their political masters, politicians pay a price by adopting a practice of "governing with the news."

As press secretaries and press officers multiply within government, the irony is that they are better able to manipulate the content of the news as they become more deeply involved in the day-to-day operations of their home institution. In other words, politicians may win the daily battles with the news media, by getting into the news as they wish, but end up losing the war, as standards of newsworthiness become prime criteria to evaluate issues, policies and politics. Is the future of American politics then to be dominated by the search for narratives that are timely, clear-cut, terse, easily described, dramatic, colorful, and visualizable? Are political actors to be increasingly judged by their successes as performers, judged by journalists with their own particular set of criteria rather than by policies that work? Can journalists break out of this? Can politicians? Can citizens?" (Cook 165).

There are a series of reforms which observers and policy-maker would do well to consider. In the introduction, this dissertation conceded that there is a space within the field of public administration for advertising campaigns and direct citizen-state communication, even persuasive campaigns aimed at modifying citizen behaviour. The most obvious examples of these kinds of campaigns are where there is a broad consensus in favour of dissuading behaviour that conflicts with important policy goals. Once one concedes the legitimacy of state action, particularly for advertising campaigns, one concedes a role for a host of other activities associated with the public relations state: public opinion research, planning. Few would argue for poorly planned, inefficient and ineffective public relations campaigns. Thus, an expanded and professional public relations function within the bureaucracy is not necessarily to be rejected out of hand. However, politics, either narrowly or broadly construed, are never absent from these activities. Nonetheless, one can reinvigorate public relations bureaucracies with a sense of public service by reinstating a distinct space, separate from the political leadership. We should strive to allow public relations professionals to design programs that support

the administration of public policies effectively and efficiently. As a result, care should be taken such that the career paths of public relations civil servants do not mirror the career paths of elected ministers, as is currently the case in too many situations in Alberta. Finally, Alberta should adopt the practice of the federal government, restricting deputy ministers from political involvement outside their professional life. Such a restriction would have prevented the managing director of the Public Affairs Bureau from serving simultaneously on the party's communications committee in 1997.

A second reform that could limit questionable public relations campaigns is to require the Auditor-General to approve all government advertising campaigns, prior to their implementation. This is currently the case in Ontario, where the Legislative Assembly passed the *Government Advertising Act* in 2004. That law specified six standards that government advertisements had to meet in order for the Auditor-General to approve them. Similarly, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly adopted legislation prohibiting government advertising 60 days before dates fixed as election dates.

While these reforms are useful, this analysis has suggested that the consequences of government public relations are exacerbated by trends within the news media. Applying external criteria to government advertising to separate the legitimate from the illegitimate is no substitute for political debate about the characteristics and content of government advertising. When the news media withdraw resources from covering public affairs, the inevitable result is that journalists have less capacity to scrutinize government activities and influence passes to official news sources. Mitigating the consequences of the public relations state requires public policy attention to Canadian media industries. Even

without calling into question the legitimacy of private ownership of the mass media, public policy can intervene in any number of ways to address the mass withdrawal of resources. Regulators, in particular the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) can prevent or limit the cross-ownership of newspapers by television broadcast companies. Currently, in Canada the Globe and Mail is partnered with the CTV national television network, which owns television stations in most urban markets and CanWest owns the Global Network, the *National Post* and daily newspapers and local television affiliates in nearly every market. These mergers were approved by the CRTC on the condition that the broadcasters contribute tangible financial benefits to promote the public interest in broadcasting. As a result, the partners to the CTV and Globe and Mail merger were required by the CRTC to create a \$230 million fund to support Canadian cultural programming. The Canadian state, via the CRTC, is directly in the business of structuring the national media markets. Policy options are open to support or hinder the quality of media coverage of public affairs.

Advocates of minimal regulation by the state in the field of media ownership consistently argue that this furthers competition and increases the quality of news by allowing large companies to invest in high quality newsroom activities. Opponents of cross-ownership suggest that precisely the opposite happens. They argue that cross-ownership and convergence leads to a reduction in voices and a diminishing of journalistic quality. For example, when the CTV and the Global Television network licenses were to be renewed, the CRTC considered requiring measures to ensure separate newsrooms. Both licensees rejected this requirement on the grounds that it might

undermine potential synergies they could obtain by merging the television and newspaper newsrooms (Schultz 2005, 27). Moreover, critics argue that linking newspapers to the regulatory process that broadcasters face leads newspapers to temper their criticisms of government, precisely because their parent company requires bureaucratic approval for license renewal. One empirical study of newspaper editorials covering presidential State of the Union addresses did find a slight, although statistically insignificant, effect such that newspapers with broadcast holdings tended to publish more positive editorials than those without broadcast holdings (Weare, Levi, and Raphael 2001). In Alberta, the data on membership in the Alberta press gallery is more unequivocal: the wave of consolidations and mergers that swept through the Canadian media industries in the late 1990s did nothing to stop a decline in membership of the Alberta press gallery. A causal relationship may not exist; that is to say, cross-ownership may not be driving the reduction of journalists in the press gallery, but it is not helping the situation.

Fourth and finally, this analysis has questioned the desirability of using public relations activities as a way of informing and engaging citizens, particularly when it comes at the expense of a vibrant party system. There is no doubt that the Klein government engaged citizens in a more direct manner than previous administrations. But this was always suspect and under the careful eye of political public relations staff. Ultimately, many of the processes were more useful in forming an elite consensus. More robust political participation, particularly through political parties, may do a better job of generating political knowledge than any public relations ministry ever can. For example, one study of the relationship between knowledge and participation found a reciprocal relationship

between knowledge and participation. Moreover, Milner has argued that the North American approach to civic education, which seeks to insulate young voters from political parties, is a flawed one; and that integrating political parties into the process of educating young voters may go further in creating more widespread civic literacy (Milner 2007). Similarly, Lasch has criticized the historic transformation of the partisan model of journalism to one that divorced itself from political parties, ostensibly providing citizens with more objective information. Democracy needs debate, not information. “But since the public no longer participates in debates on national issues, it has no reason to be better informed. When debate becomes a lost art, information makes no impression” (Lasch 1995, 2).

The government of Alberta’s own survey data shows that between 55% and 65% of survey respondents report that they are satisfied with the quality of government information they receive. Without debating whether this is a low or high proportion (Alberta’s own targets suggest this is insufficient), it is apparent that the information provided by the government to its own citizens is doing nothing to stem the most dramatic decline in voter turnout in Canada.

One alternative to a public relations model of informing and engaging citizens, therefore, is to re-engage citizens through a commitment to a more vibrant party system. Of course, this is unlikely to happen in Alberta when proposals to reinvigorate the party system would, by definition, pose its greatest threat to the party currently in power. Consequently, any attempts to reinvigorate the party system will have to come from within the opposition parties. The results of the 2008 provincial election, which created

an astonishing legislative majority for the Progressive Conservatives on an equally astonishing voter turnout of 41%, did spark some discussions within the Alberta Liberal Party and in the Alberta Federation of Labour. Elements in both groups published discussion papers calling on the opposition parties and related groups to re-evaluate how they contest elections and engage citizens between elections. This is a positive sign but it is too early to tell whether they will produce reforms of any substance.

Without any substantial reforms to reinvigorate Alberta's party system, it is likely that the public relations model of informing citizens will continue, the government of Alberta will continue to miss its own measures of success for citizen satisfaction with government information, voter turnout will remain the lowest in the country and political issues will be carefully managed by public relations staff through campaigns that provide the appearance and language of participation and consultation, while producing results that look suspiciously like the government's original positions.

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Interview 22, advertising official with the Klein government. 2007. Phone interview with author, 28 December, Edmonton.

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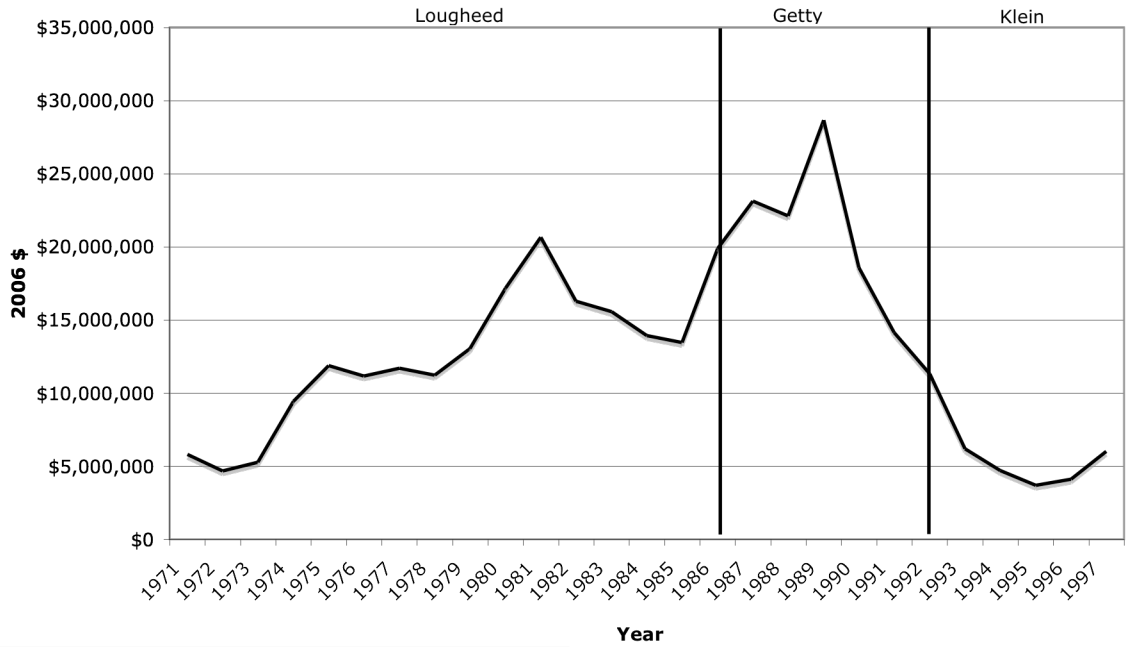
Appendix A: Career Paths Of Staff In Office of the Premier, Alberta, 1971-2007

Sources: This information is drawn from the periodical, Insight into Government (Vivone), the Government of Alberta telephone directory, Public Affairs Bureau organization charts and Government of Alberta news releases.

Premier	Staff Person	Position in the Premier's Press Office	Prior to Premier's Office	Following Premier's Office posting
Lougheed	Judy Wish	Press Secretary (1971-?) (Savage-Hughes 1992)	Calgary Office of former Premier Harry Strom (Hustak 1971, 142)	Appointed to the Government of Alberta office in Ottawa (Wood 1971, 157)
Lougheed	Ron Liepert	Press Secretary (Dates Unknown) (Vivone, 1989)	Television journalist (Vivone, 1989)	Appointed to the Government of Alberta Trade Office in Los Angeles (Vivone, 1989)
Lougheed	Joe Hutton	Press Secretary (Dates Unknown) (Vivone, 1989)	Television journalist (Vivone, 1989)	Appointed to the Alberta Liquor Control Board (Vivone, 1989)
Getty	Geoff Davey	Press Secretary 1986-1989 (Vivone, 1989)	Television journalist; Ministerial Executive Assistant (Vivone, 1989)	Appointed to the Government of Alberta Trade Office in London, United Kingdom (Vivone, 1989)
Getty	Hugh Dunne	Press Secretary 1989-1992 (Interview 4)	Television Producer (Vivone, 1989)	Director, Southern Alberta Premier's Office (Vivone, 1998)
Getty	Peter Tadman	Media Relations 1990-1992 (Vivone, 1990)	Television journalist (Vivone, 1990)	Director of Communications, Department of Justice (Vivone, 1993)
Klein	Judith Dyck	Communications Coordinator 1993-1996 (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone directory, 1993-1997)	Director of Communications, Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 1994)	Communications Consultant, Public Affairs Bureau (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Organization Chart, 1996)
Klein	David Bray	Communications Coordinator 1998-1999 (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 1998)	Print Journalist (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 1998)	Director of Communications, Public Works, Supply and Services (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 2000)
Klein	Joanne Rosnau	Communications Coordinator 2000 (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 2000)	Public Affairs Officer, Department of Culture and Multiculturalism (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 1999)	Director of Communications, Sustainable Development (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 2000)
Klein	Gordon Turtle	Communications Coordinator; Director of Communications 1999-2003 (Office of the Premier, 2000)	Director of Communications, Department of Health, Culture and Multiculturalism (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 1994, 1995, 1996)	Managing Director, Public Affairs Bureau (Office of the Premier, 2003)
Klein	Fay Orr	Communications Coordinator; Director of Communications 1997-2000 (Office of the Premier, 2000)	Director of Communications, Department of Labour (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau 1992)	Managing Director, Public Affairs Bureau, Deputy Minister of Government Services (Office of the Premier 2000, 2003)
Klein	Marisa Etmanski	Office Assistant, Media Relations Coordinator, Director of Communications (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, Telephone Directory, 1993-2003)	Unknown	Private sector (Interview 4)

Appendix B: Figures

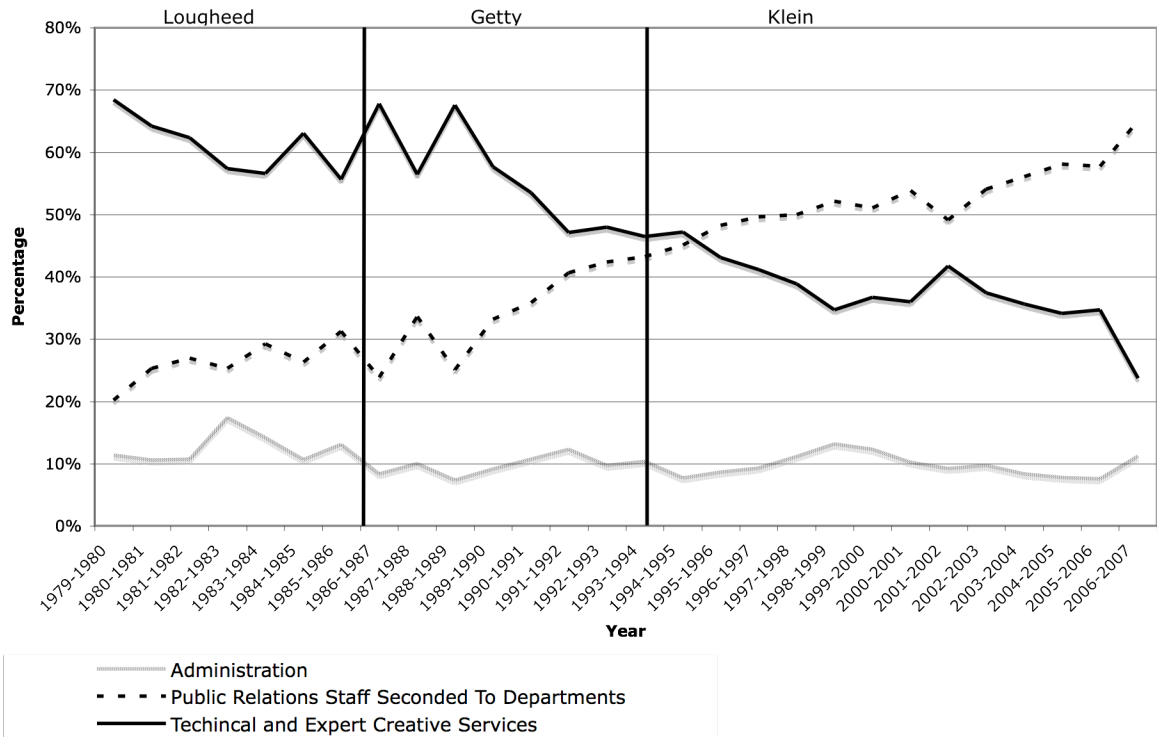
Figure B-1: Government of Alberta Advertising 1971-1997



— Real Government Advertising (2006 \$)

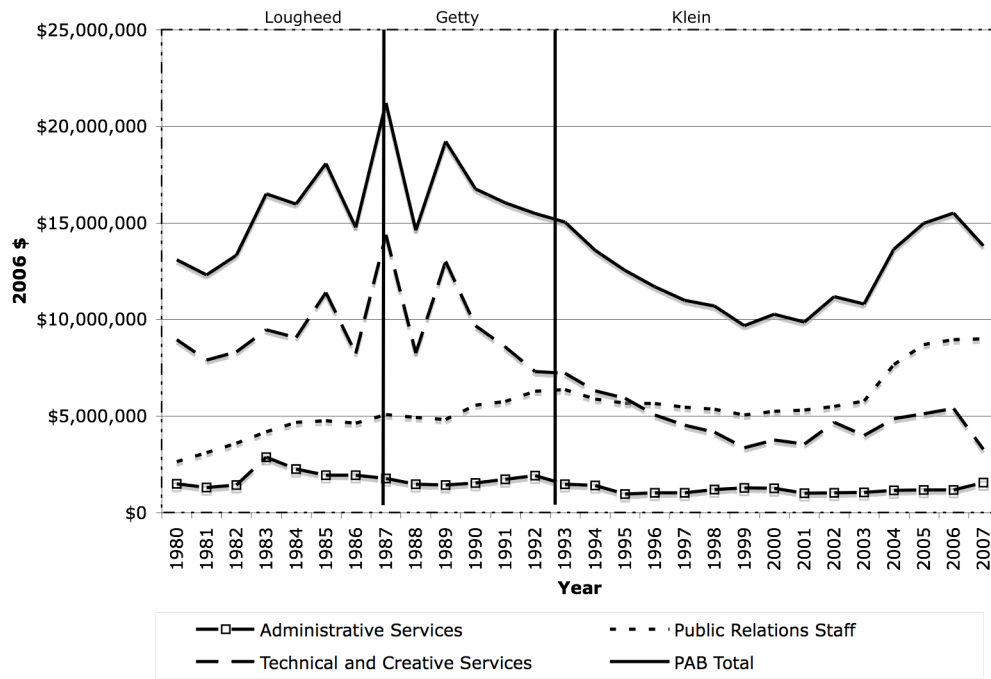
Source: Alberta Public Accounts

Figure B-2: Proportion of Public Affairs Bureau Budget On Function



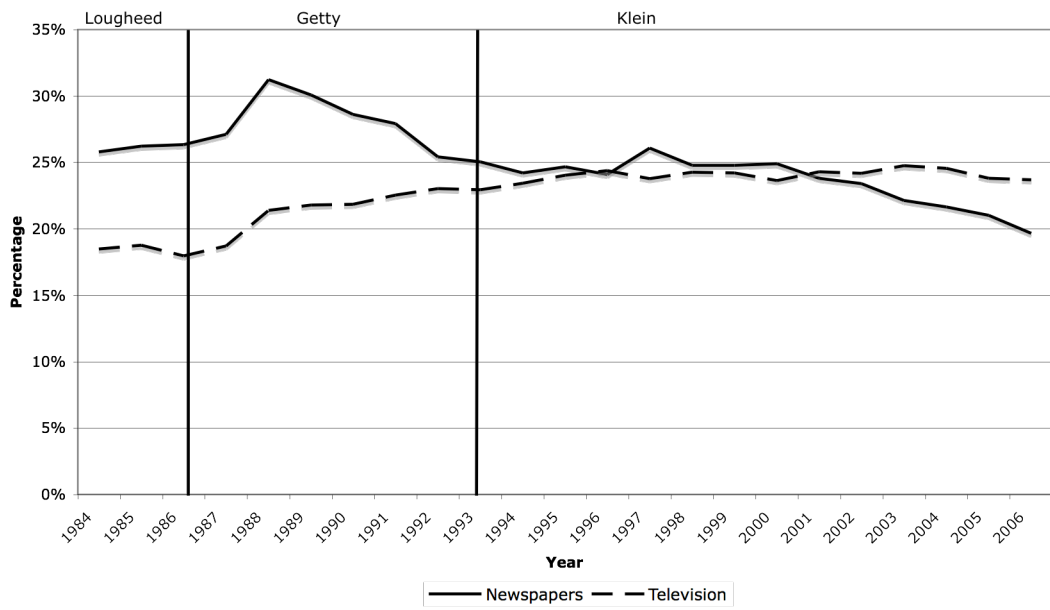
Source: Alberta Public Accounts 1979-2005

Figure B-3: Real (2006\$) Resources For The Public Affairs Bureau



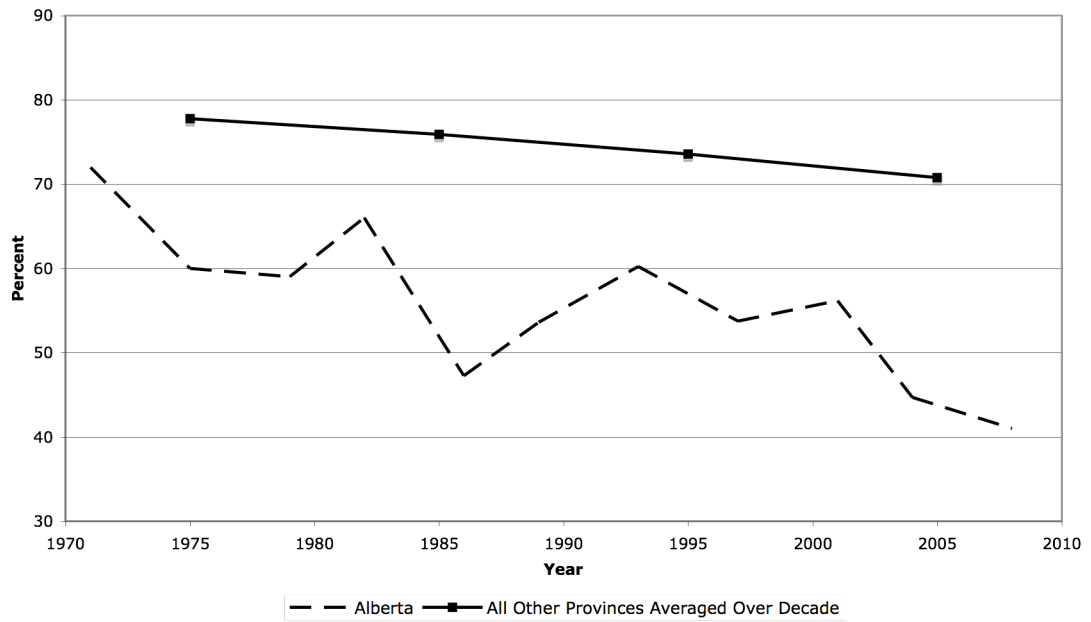
Source: Alberta Public Accounts (1980-2007)

Figure B-4: National Advertising Expenditures (Newspapers And Television)



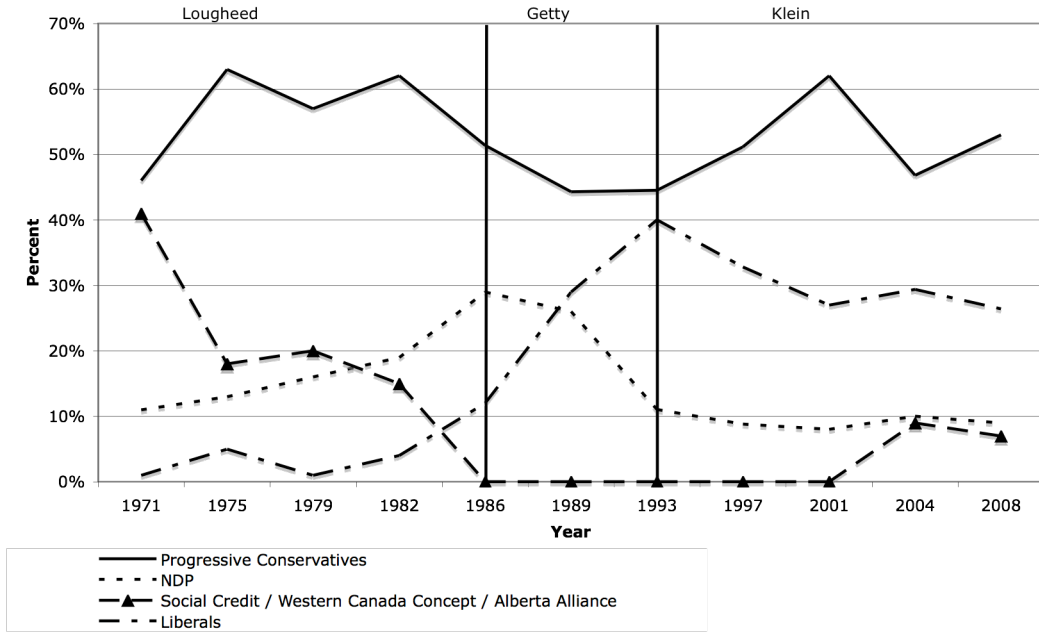
Source: Canadian Newspaper Association, Personal Communication

Figure B-5: Alberta Turnout vs. Average Turnout In All Other Provinces



Source: Data compiled by the author from respective provincial election agencies

Figure B-6: Vote Share Per Party 1971-2008



Appendix C

Print Advertisements During The Government of Alberta's Kyoto Protocol Advertising Campaign



The Alberta Plan.
Because we can do better than Kyoto.
DISCOVER THE SOLUTION

For more information, visit www.gov.ab.ca or call toll-free 310-4455 (in Alberta).

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

a message from
THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Let's Clear the Air

Alberta's commitment to action on Climate Change

There has been a lot of discussion recently about the potential causes and effects of global warming, and more importantly what actions Canada and Canadians can take to address it.

The Government of Alberta wants all Canadians to know where it stands on this important issue.

FACT The Government of Alberta is committed to taking action on climate change.

The Government of Alberta has been addressing climate change since 1990 by taking action to reduce greenhouse gases. We are acknowledged as a national leader in this area, both through our early actions and through a number of national firsts:

- The Government of Alberta is the only government in Canada to have won a national leadership award – three times to date – from the Voluntary Challenge and Registry Inc., an organization established in 1997 to help reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.
- In 1999, the government established Climate Change Central, a unique private-public partnership that serves as a catalyst and coordinator of provincial activities by individuals, businesses, institutions and communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Alberta.
- Actions taken in Government of Alberta buildings and vehicles since 1995 have resulted in a 22 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels.
- In May 2002, the Government of Alberta announced it is moving to mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas emissions from large emissions sources, and it provided funding to Climate Change Central to establish a provincial Office of Energy Efficiency.

"Of the many governments across Canada, Alberta has shown impressive leadership in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and by affirming its commitment to adhere to the voluntary reduction of greenhouse gases."

Voluntary Challenge and Registry Inc.

FACT Albertans are leaders in voluntary action on climate change.

Alberta communities, companies and individuals are leading the way in terms of early action to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions:

- Alberta is the second largest producer of wind energy in Canada. Since 1999, there has been a 10-fold increase in the amount of electricity produced from wind in the province.
- The City of Edmonton is developing a community-wide greenhouse gas reduction strategy that will support its vision to have zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- An Alberta based utilities company and the University of Alberta have entered into a \$1.1 million partnership to find cleaner ways to generate electricity, and to support teaching and other research in the energy field.

"Calgary's C-Train is North America's first wind-powered public transit system since the days of the sail... We're proud that our customers can ride the C-Train knowing they have taken this significant step towards reducing the environmental impact of urban transportation."

John Hubble
Calgary Transit General Manager

FACT Alberta has advanced a comprehensive action plan to reduce greenhouse gas.

Alberta's action plan – Albertans & Climate Change: A Plan for Action – outlines a number of actions and ideas aimed at reducing emissions, providing public leadership, investing in research and technology, conserving energy, and adapting to climate change.

Alberta's plan includes:

- Reducing emissions intensity relative to the provincial GDP by 50 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.
- Moving towards significant reductions in emissions over the longer term.
- Keeping capital and investment in both Alberta and Canada rather than spending it on emission credits and transferring wealth to other countries.

"By adopting an emissions intensity approach, a strong technological development focus and a more realistic time frame, (Alberta's) approach, in our view, will produce a more balanced approach to addressing both the environmental and economic objectives of governments."

Richard Paxon, President and CEO
Canadian Chemical Producers' Association

FACT We need a truly Canadian approach to address climate change.

Canada needs an action plan that reflects this country's unique environment, economy and way of life. Canada's plan must balance its commitment to the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions with economic prosperity.

Real and meaningful change only comes when people have a good understanding of an issue and take actions to make a difference. That is why a plan, involving every Canadian, must be the basis of a national solution on climate change.

Alberta is committed to working with other governments, industry and Canadians to achieve www.gov.ab.ca
a national solution. For more information on Alberta's plan, visit our web site at www.gov.ab.ca

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA



The Alberta Plan

Because we can do better than Kyoto.

The Alberta Action Plan on Climate Change is a realistic and workable alternative to the Kyoto Protocol – a made-in-Canada solution that balances economic sustainability with environmental commitment.

Why is the Alberta Action Plan on Climate Change better than the Kyoto Protocol?

Because it works with citizens and industry to set targets and strategies for enforceable greenhouse gas reductions. It also focuses research on technology that will reduce emissions, promotes more efficient energy use and commits to environmental responsibility over a longer term than Kyoto.

Read all about it.

For your copy of *Albertans and Climate Change: Taking Action*, visit www.gov.ab.ca

or call 310-4455 (in Alberta)

Discover the solution.



Why is Alberta Opposed to the Kyoto Protocol?



We can do better!

Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on climate change will have a profound effect on the lives of all Canadians. Albertans will be hit the hardest. You could pay more income taxes, worry about job security, and pay more for utilities and fuel. There is a better way. We need a *made-in-Canada solution* that balances greenhouse gas emissions reductions with continued prosperity.

We need a *made-in-Canada solution*.

To get your copy of *Why Alberta Opposes the Kyoto Protocol* and for more information, visit www.gov.ab.ca or call toll-free **310-4455** (in Alberta).

