The Logistics of Cooperation:
A Study of Nathan Cullen's Progressive Primaries Proposal

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The Circumstances
The past three federal elections have been won by the Conservative Party, which each time took between 36% and 40% of the popular vote. At the same time, two broadly centre-left parties, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, have a combined 44%-50% of the vote. In principle, therefore, a united left should win elections easily.

Proposals to unify the centre/left vote into a harmonized force which could defeat the Conservative government can be broadly grouped into four categories: (1) one of the two parties eclipses the other and reaches election day as the only realistic alternative, (2) the two parties merge more or less formally into a single entity, (3) the two parties maintain their separate entities but pursue a strategy of electoral cooperation, in potential preparation for a post-election governing coalition or (4) non-party organizations like Project Democracy organize strategic voting over the heads of party officials more successfully than in the past three elections.

Broadly, this study finds that (3) is at once the most palatable option for the parties and their activist bases, and the most one likely to work, i.e. to retain the support of potential centre-left voters. It does so in response to NDP leadership candidate Nathan Cullen's (Skeena) proposal[1] for electoral cooperation amongst non-Conservative voters and their parties as the centrepiece of his leadership bid. Whereas other candidates have argued that the New Democratic Party should prepare itself for a two-way race against Stephen Harper's Conservative Party in 2015 with the goal of forming a majority government, Cullen has effectively implied that this plan is not a realistic means of replacing the Harper government in the next election.

The idea that "unity" amongst a wide swath of voters, typically called "centre-right" or "centre-left," is a necessary condition for forming an stable, effective government has been accepted as a Canadian political truism since the realigning election of 1993. The three back-to-back victories in which Jean Chretien led the Liberal Party to win a majority of the seats in parliament with

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[1]In most descriptions of Cullen's proposal, it only applies to Conservative-held ridings but, in some, it appears that the proposal is applicable to all consenting ridings as a universal right enjoyed by all NDP riding associations

41%, 38% and 41% of the vote, respectively were understood as having arisen, primarily, from "vote splitting" amongst parties to the right of the Liberals. Beginning in 1997, when the combined Conservative-Reform vote was essentially tied with the Liberal Party's (38% voted Tory or Reform; 38% voted Liberal, with less than 40,000 votes separating the two totals), various attempts were made by Conservatives and Reformers to pool the two parties' votes.

The Idea of a Merger
The most significant attempts to pool the two parties' support were the United Alternative process initiated by the Reform Party in 2000, which led to the creation of the Canadian Alliance and the Conservative "merger" process initiated by the Canadian Alliance in 2003. In both cases, the vote-pooling strategy adopted by conservatives entailed creating a new "big tent" party that would function as a single organization.

Beginning in the 2004 election, the Liberal Party of Canada ceased winning a majority of Commons seats. This has typically been narrated as arising from an increase in "centre-left" vote splitting and the consolidation of the conservative vote in a single party in 2003. While this is not an incorrect description of events, the following table shows that some refinements are necessary.

Election	Reform/CA	Prog. Cons.	Centre-Right Vote	Centre-Right Seats	Vote to Seat Efficiency1	NDP	Liberal	Centre-Left Vote	Centre-Left Seats	Vote to Seat Efficiency[1]
1988	2.10%	0.43	**45.10%**	0.573	127.00%	0.204	31.90%	**0.523**	42.70%	0.82
1993	18.70%	0.16	**34.70%**	0.183	54.00%	0.069	41.20%	**0.481**	63.10%	1.31
1997	19.40%	0.188	**38.20%**	0.266	70.00%	0.111	38.50%	**0.495**	58.50%	1.18
2000	25.50%	0.122	**37.70%**	0.259	69.00%	0.085	40.90%	**0.494**	61.50%	1.24
2004	n/a	n/a	**29.60%**	0.319	108.00%	0.157	36.70%	**0.524**	49.70%	0.85
2006	n/a	n/a	**36.30%**	0.39	107.00%	0.175	30.20%	**0.477**	42.60%	0.89
2008	n/a	n/a	**37.70%**	0.461	122.00%	0.182	26.30%	**0.444**	36.80%	0.83
2011	n/a	n/a	**39.60%**	0.536	135.00%	0.306	18.90%	**0.495**	44.20%	0.89

[2]

Naturally, this table deals in gross simplifications. First, it imposes on the Liberal Party of the 1990s the same centre-left positioning that Canadians today understand the party to possess. Second, it fails to deal with Bloc and Green votes which, at least under the leadership of Elizabeth May and Gilles Duceppe, could be classed as centre-left votes.

Merger Processes on the Right
Nevertheless, the table illustrates much about vote-pooling strategies on the right. If we examine the results in 2000 versus 1997, we see that the United Alternative (UA) process, which gave rise to the Canadian Alliance failed in three ways. First, it failed to actually cause the creation of a single party; instead, it appears to have moved approximately one third of Progressive Conservative voters to the Canadian Alliance, leaving the PC party otherwise intact with a full slate of candidates and a viable parliamentary caucus. Second, it actually led to a small decline in the share of the popular vote won by the two parties collectively, amounting to the loss of half a

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[2] This figure refers to the proportion of parliamentary seats won by the parties for each percentage point of the popular vote earned.

percentage point of popular support. Third, it produced a decline of approximately equal magnitude in the share of seats won, again, about half a percent.

Of course there are many other factors that might account for these declines in support. But the lack of immediate electoral gains resulting from the UA process is significant. Although a merged party, presenting a single candidate, necessarily enjoys an efficiency gain because it avoids splitting the vote, there is no guarantee that the merged entity can attract as much support as the two predecessor parties did separately.

If we look at election returns following the merger process of 2003, we can again see a surprising lack of immediate results. While it did result in voters being faced with only a single choice, unlike the previous, more consensual, grassroots process, it did not deliver immediately on its promise. Most significantly, centre-right's share of the popular vote declined from approximately 38% to 30%. It does appear, however, to have produced an immediate payoff in the centre-right's share of the seats rising from 26% to 32%. It would take another three elections, spanning seven years, before (a) delivering a majority of Commons seats, (b) a share of the popular vote higher than that won by centre-right forces in

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1997. The lessons about party mergers are, at least from this example, relatively clear: although a merged party, presenting a single candidate, necessarily enjoys an efficiency gain because it avoids splitting the vote, there is no guarantee that the merged entity can attract as much support as the two predecessor parties did separately. Indeed this is simply common sense: essentially by definition, electors prefer to have a choice.

Furthermore, if we focus our attention on the other half of the table, we can see that the crucial 2004 results were concurrent with the start of a major shift in the distribution of the centre-left vote. In the prior three elections, NDP votes had never comprised more than one quarter of the total centre-left vote (14%, 22% and 17%, respectively); in the elections following, the NDP captured 30%, 37%, 40% and, finally, 62% of that total. The more even the distribution of the vote became between the two parties, the lower their share of commons seats. As the two parties' vote share became more evenly distributed, it became possible for the Conservative Party to win national electoral contests without ever exceeding 40% of the popular vote.

From this broad strokes review of national election results, it does not appear that the merger process that unfolded from 1998 to 2003 among Canada's centre-right parties and their activists was effective in quickly assembling a majority of voters or parliamentarians. Of the votes held by the two main parties in 1998, just shy of a quarter were lost by 2004 and had to be re-earned over the ensuing seven years. Two successive merger processes taking approximately five years were required, furthermore, to effect even this.

Merger Ideas on the Left
Leaving aside process issues and timelines, the efficacy of a merger as the best method of vote-pooling is very much open to question. In their 2010 poll addressing this question, Angus Reid-

Vision Critical measured Tory support at 35% with the Liberals and NDP, running as separate parties at a combined 46%. Depending on the leader of the new merged entity, support for a merged party ranged from 34% to 43%; and in every scenario, the Conservative Party gained anywhere from 2% to 5%.[3] In this scenario, not only would a merged party lose anywhere from 6% to 26% of its support but a merger would serve to transfer anywhere from 4% to 11% of the shared vote to the Conservative Party.

These numbers, furthermore, do not reflect the acrimony that is produced during merger processes. Both the 2000 and 2003 conservative merger processes engendered high levels of acrimony among party activists, reflected in floor-crossing, resignations and considerable media negativity. Even leaving aside the fact that the only leader Reid found would retain significantly more than four in five voters for a merged party, Jack Layton, is now deceased, this study does not account for the kind of negativity engendered by two teams of activists engaged in a protracted turf war, something inevitable as 616 riding organizations fold into 308, two youth wings fold into one, etc., never mind the effects of two caucuses merging and the number of critic and other leadership positions being cut in half.

While a minority of key opinion leaders in both parties like Chretien continue to support the idea of a merger,[4] polling last fall by Harris-Decima found that, if anything, NDP and Liberal supporters are less supportive of a merged party than Progressive Conservatives and Reformers/CA supporters were on the eve of either centre-right unity process. 48% of Liberals and 67% of New Democrats were found to oppose a merger of the parties.[5] For this reason, even Reid's scenario of the two parties shedding a mere fifth of their voters seems highly optimistic.

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Going It Alone
Typically, the alternative presented to a merger of the New Democrats and Liberals is for the NDP to assemble sufficient votes to defeat the Conservative Party on its own. The seven leadership candidates against whom Cullen is running generally argue that the New Democratic Party will succeed in 2015 by making an argument similar to that made by Chretien in the 2000 election by arguing that the only way to prevent a conservative victory is for centre-left voters to coalesce behind the most popular of the progressive parties.

While such a scenario is possible, there are a number of challenges that those employing it on behalf of the NDP in 2015 might face that were not faced by the Liberals under Chretien or by provincial New Democrats in Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Manitoba who have used similar rhetoric in provincial general elections.

[3] "Tories Keep Lead, But Liberal-NDP Merger Could Change Status Quo; A single centre-left party would provide a real challenge to the Conservatives, but only if it is led by Jack Layton or Bob Rae," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2010.05.31_Politics_CAN.pdf.
[4] Laura Payton, "Ex-PM Jean Chrétien predicts NDP-Liberal merger," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/09/06/pol-chretien-merger.html.
[5] Alan Gregg, "Majority Oppose Liberal-NDP Merger," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.harrisdecima.com/sites/default/files/releases/2011/09/09/hd-2011-09-09-en1224.pdf.

First, such a case would be unprecedented in English Canada and could not rely on multi-generational habits on the part of voters. Whereas this case can be made and has been made repeatedly on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada since the days of William Lyon Mackenzie King, most notably in the 1935 and 1945 elections, it has never been made by New Democrats at the federal level. Furthermore, such an argument would entail New Democrats successfully exaggerating their 2011 electoral gains outside of Québec.

Setting aside Quebec, we see that NDP results in 2011 were in no way unprecedented or a breakthrough in the way that the results appear to be when Quebec is included. In 1945, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation under M. J. Coldwell won 782,388 votes, comprising 20.4% of the popular vote outside of Québec and 28 of the 180 seats (16%) in English Canada. In 1988, the NDP under Ed Broadbent won 2,204,020 votes, comprising 22.8% of the popular vote outside of Québec and 43 of the 220 seats (20%) in English Canada. In 2011, the NDP under Jack Layton won 2,880,245 votes, comprising 26.3% of the popular vote outside of Québec and 44 of the 233 seats (19%) in English Canada. The fact that English Canada delivered a lower proportion of its seats to New Democrats in 2011 than in 1988 and that just slightly more than one in four Anglo voters voted for the party is indicative of the radically different track record the party must account for when pitching strategic voting outside of Québec.

Should the parties be even slightly close in popular vote on Election Day in 2015, strategic voting arguments by the NDP's new leader might actually backfire, as they did for Michael Ignatieff in 2011

Second, such a case would need to be based on a strong lead in public opinion polls. The incumbent Liberals in 2000 enjoyed nearly quadruple the support of New Democrats when Chretien made his strategic voting pitch that fall. Yet recent polling shows anything but a lock for New Democrats this time most recently, Nanos Research found the NDP with 25% of the vote, in third place behind the Liberal Party of Canada[1] While exceptional, the poll is not unique in showing a declining NDP and resurgent Liberal Party. Should the parties be even slightly close in popular vote on Election Day in 2015, strategic voting arguments by the NDP's new leader might actually backfire, as they did for Michael Ignatieff in 2011.

More troublingly, every poll released in 2012 has shown the Liberals leading the New Democrats in Ontario,[2] just as the polling in the second half of 2011 generally saw the Liberals as the main centre-left alternative in the province. This is obviously important because of the sheer number of seats in Ontario, but also presents a particular challenge because of the crucial

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[6] "Tories lead by 8, Grits and NDP statistically tied," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.nanosresearch.com/library/polls/2012-01%20Ballot%20PackageE.pdf.

[7] E.g. Ibid.; Mario Canseco, "Tories Lead, Liberals Gain But Remain in Third Place in Canada," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/2012.01.24_Politics_CAN.pdf; "Federal Politics Update Vote Intention, Government Approval, and Leader Favourability," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://abacusdata.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Political-Update-January-2012.pdf; Allan Gregg, "Federal Vote Intention Tightens," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.decima.com/sites/default/files/releases/2012/01/25/hd-2012-01-25-en1297.pdf.

role of the national media, overwhelmingly based in Toronto and Ottawa, as the necessary platform for campaigning for strategic voting.

While the NDP experience in 2011 proves that major breakthroughs are always possible, the very fact that even with the party's highly publicized surge in Québec, the NDP was unable to match Broadbent's 1988 result in English Canada is, at the very least, a cause for concern about any strategy that would seek to position the NDP as a natural or inevitable choice for those casting anti-Tory votes in the Anglo-majority provinces. While pragmatic or feasibility-centred arguments for consolidating votes behind a single party, whether advanced by Liberals, New Democrats or Greens, will face unprecedented obstacles in 2015, untried principle-based arguments may not. Any party viewed by voters as having sincerely attempted a vote-pooling effort in the form of a merger or a proposal like the one this paper evaluates could make the case to centre-left voters that it deserved to be the entity behind which the centre-left united. A party that appeared to have placed the national interest ahead of its partisan agenda and sincerely attempted cooperation with its centre-left competitors might argue that it was a more trustworthy team around which progressive forces should coalesce.

Third-Party Vote-Pooling Efforts
Lacking any institutional vote-pooling by way of a merger, there has been an increasing enthusiasm on the part of centre-left Canadian activists and opinion leaders for planned, organized strategic voting campaigns to advise voters in ridings won by Conservatives with low pluralities due to vote-splitting. In the 2011 election, this reached an unprecedented level of legitimacy and prominence exemplified in the Toronto Star's pre-election editorial "But Vote Strategically,"[8] a follow-up to its endorsement of the New Democratic Party in which the paper's editorial writers attempted to identify ridings in which a Liberal candidate was the only efficient anti-Conservative vote.

The Star accurately guessed the correct opposition candidate in each of the ridings it identified but, in part due to its own previous editorial,[9] was unable to stem the flow of votes from the Liberals to the NDP, sufficiently to prevent a Conservative sweep of all six. Catch-22, one of the main third party electoral organizations to encourage strategic voting, only chose to offer recommendations in sixty-one ridings, all of which the organization studied both in compiling its list of target districts and tracking the viability of progressive candidates during the election. Yet, in its final list of recommendations, it was unable to advise voters of the most efficient choice in five ridings, labelling them "too close to call," despite having attempted to disqualify ridings

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[8] "But Vote Strategically," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/983380.
[9] "Toronto Star Endorses the NDP," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/article/983376--toronto-star-endorses-the-ndp.

likely to fall into that category from the outset.[10]

Of the fifty-six in which the organization did offer a recommendation, and despite its selection process, extensive research, use of Eric Grenier's election forecasting data and on-the-ground campaigning, it ended up mis-guessing the most efficient anti-Conservative vote in nine ridings and advising voters to transfer votes *away* from the candidate with the best chance of winning.

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Of the forty-seven correctly guessed districts, Catch-22 was as unsuccessful as the Star in preventing Conservative victories with thirty-four returning Tory MPs. In part this was because a number of the districts, particularly in Ontario, had become, between election day in 2008 and 2011, places in which strategic voting was of no utility because the Conservatives were able to convert voting pluralities into outright majorities, most dramatically witnessed in the suburban Toronto riding of Thornhill, won with 63% of the vote.[11] In all, of the sixty-one ridings in which Catch-22 campaigned, it correctly identified and endorsed just thirteen victorious candidates, only three of whom were not either incumbents or representing the incumbent party.

The larger, better-funded Project Democracy, despite having the resources to professionally poll voters in the weeks leading up to the election did little better in its eighty-four targeted ridings. Whereas Catch-22 had a 16% error rate in selecting the wrong centre-left candidate, Project Democracy managed a 13% rate, despite its superior polling data.[12] Similarly, only twenty-six of the ridings were won by opposition parties and the majority of these simply returned the incumbent party.

While hundreds of thousands of Canadians sought out or were exposed to progressive strategic voting recommendations for their ridings, anti-Conservative votes were less efficiently distributed in 2011 than in any previous election since 1984, with each 1% of the vote delivering 1.35% of the seats to the Conservative Party

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[10] Gary Shaul, "Riding Selection," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://catch22campaign.ca/page/riding-selection.

[11] Gary Shaul, "Catch 22 Ridings," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://catch22campaign.ca/notes.

[12] "ProjectDemocracy.ca releases new riding specific polling," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.projectdemocracy.ca/projectdemocracyca-releases-new-riding-specific-polling; "Project Democracy: 2011 Electoral Analysis – Part 1," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.projectdemocracy.ca/project-democracy-2011-electoral-analysis-%E2%80%93-part-1.

The Cullen Proposal

Given the difficulties associated with an institutional merger, going it alone and vote-pooling directed by non-party actors, there are good reasons for alternative vote-pooling strategies to receive serious consideration among those wishing to cast efficient votes against the Harper government in 2015. The most prominent of these proposals, today, is the plan on which Nathan Cullen is campaigning for the federal NDP leadership.

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Regional and Historical Context
It is perhaps no coincidence that this proposal is coming from the solitary British Columbian candidate in the race. Since the formation of the socialist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation for the 1933 provincial general election, BC politics has been defined by vote-pooling efforts on the both the right and left.

Immediately following the 1941 election, in which the CCF won a plurality of the popular vote, reducing the Liberals to a minority government, the Liberal and Conservative caucuses merged into an entity simply called "the Coalition." This coalition was not a merged party like the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003, which united two caucuses but was, instead, a complex agreement-brokered alliance between two parties that retained their own memberships, legislative caucuses (in addition to their integrated caucus and cabinet), and organization and maintained separate leaders. Each Coalition member of the legislature was either a Liberal or a Conservative, despite running as part of a unified slate.[13]

The two parties determined which party's candidate would contest each constituency, which party's leader would serve as premier (even though both leaders campaigned as party leaders in each general election) and which members would be included in their shared cabinet through an *ad hoc* mixture of caucus votes and negotiated bilateral agreements.[14] These agreements collapsed in 1951 and the two caucuses separated, leaving the Liberals in minority government, as they had been in 1941. Despite the Coalition's ultimate collapse, the 1945 and 1949 elections were won with a nearly unprecedented outright majority of the vote and overwhelming majority of the seats, demonstrating, at least in the medium term, the efficacy of a model of vote-pooling that offers voters a single candidate in every riding without any organizational merger.

Much like the Lebanese confessional voting system, in which each religious community has an allotted number of deputies in the Parliament, and which fragmented and dissolved into civil war due to its fixity to the 1922 census, in the face of changing religious demographics, the durability of the Coalition was likely threatened by its process of determining which districts should be contested by which of its constituent groups:

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[13] Donald E. Blake, David J. Elkins, Richard Johnston, *Two political worlds: parties and voting in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of BC Press, 1985), 17.
[14] Donald Alper, "The Effects of Coalition Government on Party Structure: The Case of the Conservative Party in B.C." *BC Studies* 33, 1977: 40.

The procedure provided that: (1) present coalition MLAs, or adherents of the same party, would run in the seats then held by Liberals and Conservatives; (2) in other constituencies a convention would be held, with equal representation from each party, and the "best candidate without regard to party affiliation" would be sought; and (3) in two-member constituencies, each party would nominate one candidate. In both 1945 and 1949 the coalition won large majorities, winning thirty-seven of forty-eight seats in 1945 and thirty-nine of forty-eight seats in 1949. Representation of the two parties in coalition remained stable through the 1945 election, but in 1949 the Liberals gained two seats while the Conservatives lost one.[1]

Not only were the Conservatives the junior partners when the Coalition was formed in 1941; this minority remained an organizational feature of the Coalition as seats gained in 1945 and 1949 were naturally less secure than the safer constituencies with which each party started. While highly effective in vote-pooling initially, the Coalition's agreement ultimately entrenched and magnified prior inequalities between the partners.

Following the collapse of the Coalition, two other methods of vote-pooling were utilized by centre-right BC forces. The first, effected through changes to provincial electoral law, is outside of the consideration of this study as centre-left Canadian parties lost access to such options in 2011 as the Conservatives moved from minority to majority government. The second, in effect from 1956 to 1991 was similar to the outcome of the 2000 United Alternative process at the federal level, whereby activists from the Liberal and Conservative parties joined a new political organization, the Social Credit Party without formally de-constituting either of the parties that comprised the Coalition.

Municipally, centre-left British Columbians have had more recent experiences with vote-pooling. From 1980 to the present, Vancouver's Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) has fielded slates organized similarly to the Coalition of the 1940s. Partnering variously with the Civic Independents (1980-86), Civic New Democrats (1986-93), Vancouver Green Party (1999 and 2008) and Vision Vancouver (2008-11), the party has been part of coalitions governing the city for ten of the past thirty-two years. It is noteworthy that of the times centre-left forces have won municipal elections in Vancouver (1980, 1982, 1984, 2002 and 2011), they have done so as a single party only once (2002) and that during the following mandate, the party split into two caucuses and entered the 2005 election as two separate parties fielding a joint slate.

Despite the need to coalesce around a single mayoral candidate, the practice of fielding candidates in a ten-member city-wide "at large" district, due to the lack of a system of geographic wards, has meant that progressive Vancouverites have faced less fraught negotiations regarding the allocation of seats to each party. In each election in which a joint slate has been offered, negotiators for each centre-left party have produced seat allocation agreements which, in turn, have been presented to members of each party for approval. In 2011, the agreement between COPE and Vision was bitterly contested, with nearly one in three COPE members voting to reject it. Similarly, Green Party members have voted to reject offers in 1993, 2002 and 2011, although this greater penchant to reject offers may be credited to the Greens' exclusion from these negotiations and presentation with a *fait accompli* by the two senior partners.

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[1] Ibid., 41.

With recent memories of Premier Glen Clark's endorsement of left-Green electoral alliances in Vancouver and Victoria in 1999 and the abortive attempt by Green Party officials to negotiate provincial agreement for the 2001 election, centre-left British Columbians have a rich political memory of vote pooling efforts working both for and against them.

International Context
The French legislative election of 1997 remains a signal example of flexible electoral cooperation which successfully achieved a change in government. There are noteworthy differences from the Canadian context: in particular the centre of gravity of the parties involved was more clearly on the left, and the election was contested under the unusual French two-round voting system. However, it is not difficult to see beyond these differences to the evident similarities.

The French right (itself led by an alliance of two distinct parties which practice electoral cooperation) had won the 1993 election convincingly, and, separately, won the presidency in 1995. Fearing that the next legislative election might be closely contested, the new president, Jacques Chirac, tried to take the opposition by surprise by dissolving the legislature in the spring of 1997, bringing the election forward by a year.

The election was of course timed with an eye to re-electing the right-wing government, and, indeed, the first opinion polls suggested another right-wing victory. However, the left ran a surprisingly effective campaign, much of it built around a new loosely-constituted coalition, the *Gauche Plurielle*. This in fact included five parties, but to simplify we can focus on just three: the Socialist Party, which had recently been a party of government, a Communist Party which, while well below the high-water mark it reached in the 1970s, held significant pockets of support in the Paris suburbs, and a growing Green Party which had achieved some electoral success at other levels of government.

The coalition was initiated by an agreement between the Socialists and Greens, reached in January 1997. Under this, the Greens agreed not to stand candidates in 79 districts (of a total of 577), most of these being key marginals where vote-splitting risked electing right-wing candidates. Conversely, the Socialists agreed not to contest 29 districts. Many of these were right-wing strongholds where the Greens could run vanity campaigns on local issues, such as on opposition to a new runway for a local airport, but around a dozen were seats which the Greens stood a significant chance of winning with socialist support. In the remaining 469 districts not covered by the agreement, both parties were free to stand candidates if they so chose; the parties did not adopt a common platform or demand policy concessions.

The fact that the Communist Party support was concentrated into pockets where they were effectively the mainstream left alternative meant that no formal agreement with the Communists was necessary; they simply became the *de facto* coalition candidates in around 50 districts.

The first round of voting was held on May 25th. Under the French system, any candidate gaining about 20% of the first-round vote (the actual number is 12.5% of *registered voters*) has the right to remain on the ballot for the second round, which was a week later on June 1st. One might

expect this to lead to a straight run-off between the leading right-wing and the leading left-wing candidate but in practice the second round generally includes around 100 three-way races (and a small number of four-way races), in which vote-splitting is an obvious hazard. However, vote splitting on the left was avoided by the universal withdrawal of candidates in favour of the best-placed candidate from the coalition. Moreover, large-scale rallies featuring leading figures from all coalition parties were held in the week between the two rounds of voting, notably in the Green leader's district in the French Alps, and in the Communist strongholds in the Paris suburbs, with the obvious goal of ensuring a high turn-out of left-wing voters even when their first-choice party was no longer on the ballot.

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The result was a left-wing victory, with a solid majority including 250 Socialists, thirty-six Communists, twelve Radicals, seven Greens, and eleven others, a total of 316 of the 577 seats.

Evidently, the ability to broker this agreement was greatly facilitated by the existence of the two-round system, which functioned (as it is meant to do) as a left-wing primary. A Canadian coalition wishing to respect voter choice in candidate selection would have to arrange, and finance, its own primaries or caucuses. However, the Canadian case has the advantage of simplicity: there are fewer potential coalition partners, and indeed a coalition could function very well with just two. Moreover, in France it was necessary to handle agreement with the Communist Party with some delicacy. The corresponding political challenge in Canada would be something not contemplated in Cullen's proposal: inclusion of the Bloc Québecois.

A further complication in the French context was the strength of the far right; the National Front enjoyed a particularly successful election, taking 15% of the first-round vote (but only one seat). However, the effect of this was merely to drive the vote of the mainstream right down below 40%, where in Canada it is anyway; hence the required target to defeat the government in Canada in 2012 is broadly comparable to what it was in France in 1997.

Specifics of the Proposal
Unlike the French and British Columbian models of multi-party electoral cooperation, the Cullen proposal entails a bottom-up system of agreements at the electoral district level. In the candidate's proposal, New Democrats would entitle their local riding associations to make bi- or multilateral agreements with any centre-left party other than the Bloc Québecois to field joint candidates. Agreements, then, might include Greens, Liberals or both. Given the inclusion of the Bloc Québecois in the negotiations and final agreement supporting the abortive Liberal-NDP coalition that produced the 2008/09 prorogation crisis, this restriction's basis seems somewhat incongruous. But given that anti-Conservative vote-splitting and NDP under-representation are much more significant problems in English Canada, it, at least, does not appear especially harmful, given that the high water mark in Conservative support in Québec delivered only ten of the province's seventy-five seats to the party in 2008.

NDP riding associations, then, would be entitled to make agreements with other parties to conduct what has been termed in some interviews, a "progressive primary." This primary would

take place only after each of the parties had conducted its own nomination meeting, producing a two-phase process, with each party offering a single nominee for a second meeting, at which members of all of the participating parties would be able to vote. The victor at that meeting would then go on to stand as the candidate under the banner of the party that nominated her and the other parties' candidates would withdraw. The Cullen campaign is somewhat tentative in its advocacy of a two-round process, suggesting that a different process might be negotiated between participating parties at either the national or riding level.[16]

The electoral success of this model is highly contingent on the second- and third-preference choices of NDP, Green and Liberal supporters. Whereas a system more akin to actual US primaries, such as that recently adopted by the Liberal Party of Canada for its leadership contests but rejected for local candidate nominations,[17] might mitigate this effect by involving rank-and-file voters of selecting a single standard-bearer in an anti-Conservative alliance, this is unlikely in a process limited only to paid-up members of the parties. New Democrats typically enjoy a higher ratio of members to voters than Liberals and a vastly higher one than Greens; yet, in November 2011, two months into the party's leadership race, party membership hovered around 100,000 compared to the 4.5 million voters the party had attracted in the May election, a little over 2%.[18]

> **The electoral success of this model is highly contingent on the second- and third-preference choices of NDP, Green and Liberal supporters.**

The 95% or more of Canadian voters uninvolved in the local brokerage process and nominating competitions might reasonably be expected, if confronted with the absence of their preferred party on the ballot, to use their own judgment rather than that of their local riding association in determining their vote.

Various polls have been conducted in the past five years tracking second preferences on the part of Canadians voters. In the January prior to the 2011 election, Abacus Data, for instance, found that 75% of Liberals and New Democrats and 79% of Greens were willing to switch their votes to a second-choice party compared to just 44% of Conservatives. While 71% of those Liberals favoured transferring their votes to the Greens or New Democrats, only 25% made the Tories their second choice; New Democrats exhibited the same essential preferences (71% to 20%), while Greens were slightly less committed to casting a centre-left ballot (65% to 27%).

However, when EKOS Research began polling on this question at the beginning of the NDP's 2011 surge in late April, greater centre-left solidarity was found. Greens, New Democrats and Liberals, were the most willing to vote for a second or third-choice party, with approximately

[16] "Joint nominations and electoral reform: defending Canadian values," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://en.nathancullen.ca/joint_nominations; "Cooperation Frequently Asked Questions (and answers!)," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://en.nathancullen.ca/cooperation_faqs.

[17] Jane Taber, "Liberals elect Crawley as president, reject US-style primaries," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/liberals-elect-crawley-as-president-reject-us-style-primaries/article2303103/.

[18] "UPDATED: Ontario growing in importance, latest NDP Membership numbers show," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.punditsguide.ca/2011/11/ontario-growing-in-importance-latest-ndp-membership-numbers-show/

80% of each party's supporters declaring their willingness to do so (versus just half of Conservative supporters).[19] Of the voters willing to switch to another party, 87% of Greens were willing to switch to the Liberals or NDP versus 9% to the Conservatives; Liberals, similarly, would switch to other centre-left federalist parties at a rate of 85% versus 11%. Curiously, New Democrats were the voters found least likely to switch to other parties included in the proposal, with just 67% voting Green or Liberal with 17% switching to the Conservatives and a noteworthy 15% returning to the Bloc.[20] This poll, it should be noted, constituted a high water mark in vote portability amongst the three parties, unmatched before or after, even though NDP and Liberal openness to transferring votes actually grew in the final week. However, the main beneficiaries of this new openness were the Conservatives.[21]

> **In the absence of proportional representation or a genuinely inclusive primary system... all vote-pooling schemes entail alienating some portion of those voters in whose interest they are implemented**

These snapshots provided by Frank Graves and others are by no means an extensive inventory of second preferences on the part of Green, Liberal and NDP supporters. But they are indicative that, while shedding supporters to the Conservative Party at a lower rate than a formal merger, any alliance that withdraws political choices from progressive Canadians will reduce the total number of Canadians casting centre-left votes. Perhaps this helps to explain the Cullen campaign's efforts to link the alliance to the enactment of some form of proportional representation so as to promise voters that the loss of their chance to vote for their preferred party would be temporary and that their vote for the party of their choice would become more effective in subsequent elections.

Ultimately, in the absence of proportional representation or a genuinely inclusive primary system, both things that would have to be enacted by way of a parliamentary majority, all vote-pooling schemes entail alienating some portion of those voters in whose interest they are implemented.

Clean up this very muddy sentence. Even in its present form, the Cullen plan is clearly superior to the other three major options examined, i.e. merging, going it alone and third/non-party vote pooling. But in this form it does share a key deficiency with the latter option: potentially anemic local participation.

Implementation Challenges
As far as can be discerned from the details of the plan offered so far, a riding would be able to conduct a progressive primary only following the success of bi- or multilateral negotiations with the other progressive, federalist parties in the same district. In practical terms, negotiations could only be conducted by one of three possible groups: (a) the executive of the NDP riding

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[19] "Conservative Lead by Eight; Race in Ontario Tightens," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://abacusdata.ca/2011/01/28/federal-politics-liberals-gain-three-as-race-in-ontario-tightens.
[20] "NDP's New Status as Second Runner Holding; What Does This Mean Now," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.ekos.com/admin/articles/FG-2011-04-26.pdf.
[21] "NDP Rise Continues as Liberals Swoon and Conservatives Stuck; Ontario Split as Uncertain but Tectonic Transformation of Political Landscape Underway," last accessed February 9th, 2012, http://www.ekos.com/admin/articles/FG-2011-04-29.pdf.

association, (b) a committee or individual appointed by the executive or (c) a committee or individual mandated by the members of the riding in a special or annual general meeting. Approval for any successful agreement would require the approval of, at a minimum, the executive and, more likely, the members in general meeting. Even the largest of these bodies (the annual general meeting) would represent a small fraction of the party members in the riding who, as noted above, are already a tiny proportion of NDP voters there.

Leaving this decision to such a small proportion of New Democrats would not, itself, be problematic, were the group broadly representative of party supporters. However, such groups tend to deviate from typical party supporters in crucial ways highly germane to questions of vote-pooling. And this deviation, furthermore, only increases the more heavily impacted the district is by vote-splitting.

Supporters who function as riding activists tend to place a much greater importance on party brand than those whose activism takes place through civil society and advocacy organizations and vastly greater importance on brand than progressive voters not engaged in activism at all. In other words, attendees at riding association general meetings and, especially, on riding association executives are those most committed to the intrinsic value of their party brand, be they Liberals, Greens or New Democrats. This is mitigated, to an extent, in ridings won by the party in question because riding executives and meeting attendees might alternatively construct their identity or loyalty as pertaining to a progressive MP and/or her constituency work rather than simply the party brand.

Prevalent secular quasi-millennial beliefs regarding imminent environmental catastrophe or the sudden collapse of the financial system might also feed into an irrational propensity to "go it alone."

The longer an NDP riding association has been without an incumbent MP, we would suggest, the smaller and more committed to the intrinsic value of fielding an NDP candidate the local organization and therefore, the more resistant to progressive primaries. Members in these ridings, in light of the 2011 Québec results, are also more likely to harbour long-shot ideas of sudden, massive victories in the absence of local organizations. Prevalent secular quasi-millennial beliefs regarding imminent environmental catastrophe or the sudden collapse of the financial system might also feed into an irrational propensity to "go it alone," as evident in grassroots mobilization against the BC Green Party's efforts to form an electoral alliance with the NDP in 1999. To use a term coined by those seeking to rebuild the Progressive Conservative Party in the mid-90s under the leadership of Jean Charest, activists in marginal ridings tend to be "on side for the big win."

A key challenge, then, with respect to the workability of the Cullen proposal is the probable inverse correlation between the utility of vote-pooling in a riding and the receptiveness of local party activists to it. And an aggravating factor, furthermore, would be the two-stage nomination process that has been tentatively proposed. With each of the participating parties nominating their own candidate and fielding her in a joint nominating meeting, voting would likely break down on highly partisan grounds. Participants who had participated in selecting their party's candidate in the first meeting would be highly predisposed to vote for her at a second meeting

over "another party's" candidate, except in the event of their candidate's elimination in a multi-round runoff.

This likelihood might strongly discourage parties whose membership lags behind that of its potential allies in a particular district. Activists in districts with first-term incumbent MPs would have cause to be especially wary, such as on the Island of Montréal, where it might take years to build the scale of organization Liberals have built over generations. And if the possibility of a straight partisan vote at a second-round nomination meeting might discourage New Democrats in key districts, its chilling effect on Green Party participation would be even more substantial. Already an international brand with a much higher ratio of voters to members globally, Greens would not only be discouraged by their smaller membership size but by their lower level of per-voter organizational incorporation and mobilization even in the event of parity in popular vote (a very unlikely eventuality).

Fortunately, there exist some countervailing forces that may mitigate the partisan parochialism identified above. Prior to the 2003 election finance reform that introduced a per-vote subsidy for political parties, the Green Party had never previously fielded a full slate of candidates at the federal level in Canada. Expensive candidate deposits and minimal organization in many suburban and agricultural districts made the costs of fielding a full slate of Green candidates high and the associated rewards negligible. But with the advent of the per-vote subsidy, a substantial

Fortunately, there exist some countervailing forces that may mitigate... partisan parochialism.

financial advantage was introduced for the Greens to field a full slate. Similarly, Liberals and New Democrats enjoyed a novel financial reward for fielding full slates, something that had previously only conferred bragging rights as "national parties."

The Harper government's repeal of the subsidy removes a crucial incentive for centre-left parties to field competing candidates in districts they cannot win. Furthermore, given the Cullen proposal's attachment to instituting a form of proportional representation almost certain to restore per-vote funding, a property of most PR systems, standing down candidates in unwinnable districts would not only conserve scarce funds but could increase the chances of funding being restored.

Assessment
Were this study an assessment of the Cullen proposal relative to an ideal in vote-pooling, our assessment might be somewhat less enthusiastic. However, the only proposals against which it is reasonable to assess the progressive primary plan are those currently being practiced or advocated by centre-left political activists in Canada.

Against the vote-pooling organizations and strategies used by civil society organizations since 2006, there is much to recommend progressive primaries. Even in the event that not a single riding-level agreement is made, no harm will have been done and non-party-directed vote pooling can proceed as it has in past elections. Furthermore, in every riding where a successful agreement is made, progressive third parties will be able to evacuate their funds and organization and deploy them in ridings where no agreement exists. Similarly, zero participation in

progressive primaries is indistinguishable from the strategy of going it alone touted by every other NDP leadership candidate.

The high rate of willingness on the part of Green, Liberal and NDP voters to select as their second or third choice another centre-left party and the low rate at which such voters would transfer their votes to Conservative candidates renders progressive primaries almost immune from causing a district currently held by a centre-left party to switch to the Conservatives, at least in English Canada. In Québec, however, there is cause for some concern. Here, the victory of non-NDP candidates in progressive primaries could produce substantial vote transfers to the Bloc Québecois, resulting in Bloc or, even more troublingly, Conservative victories. Especially in Montréal, where Liberal membership remains high and riding infrastructure superior, local NDP approval of progressive primaries in ridings won with low pluralities (i.e. less than 40%) could yield a net reduction in centre-left representation.

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Whereas harm might be done in districts like Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Hochelaga or La Pointe-de-l'Île where the victory of a Liberal candidate in a progressive primary over the NDP incumbent would likely result in the return of the riding to the BQ fold, we raise more substantial concerns about the handful of ridings where Conservative candidates' chances would be raised. A Liberal or Green win in a progressive primary and the resulting shift of NDP votes to the Bloc and Conservatives would potentially place the following NDP-held ridings in Conservative hands: Pierrefonds-Dollard, Pontiac, Jonquière-Alma, Chicoutimi-Le Fjord, Louis-Hebert, Charlesbourg-Haute-Saint-Charles and Louis-Saint-Laurent; furthermore, it would likely dash the hopes of progressives in taking the narrowly-won Tory districts of Montmagny-L'Islet-Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup and Lotbinière-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, imperilling nine seats in total. While a high participation rate in progressive primaries might constitute a boon for centre-left voters in English Canada, the number of Québec ridings it might shift to the Conservative side of the ledger could as much as triple Tory representation in the province in a worst-case scenario.

This, however, is a minimal risk for two reasons: first, it is highly unlikely that NDP organizations would assent to progressive primaries in a situation where their outcome would be so potentially harmful. Second, and more importantly, as noted above, in most articulations of the Cullen proposal, it applies exclusively to Conservative-held ridings and not to districts in which the NDP or Liberals were narrowly victorious. In this way, not only is it highly unlikely that New Democrats would choose progressive primaries in the at-risk Québec ridings, it is even more unlikely that they would even be permitted to do so.

This potential loss of representation in Québec should be compared against the thirty-five ridings in English Canada the same hypothetical maximum levels of participation in progressive primaries might produce. The sheer number requires that the list appear in table form:

Western Canada	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Ottawa West-Nepean
Blackstrap (SK)	Brampton West	Ottawa-Orléans
Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River (SK)	Don Valley East	Pickering-Scarborough East
Elmwood-Transcona (MB)	Don Valley West	Richmond Hill
Palliser (SK)	Etobicoke Centre	Sault Ste. Marie
Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar (SK)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Scarborough Centre
Vancouver Island North (BC)	Kitchener Centre	Willowdale
Vancouver South (BC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	**Maritimes**
West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast (BC)	London North Centre	Labrador (NL)
Winnipeg-South Centre (MB)	London West	Madawaska-Restigouche (NB)
Yukon (YK)	Mississauga East-Cooksville	Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe (NB)
Ontario	Mississauga-Streetsville	South Shore-St. Margaret's (NS)
Ajax-Pickering	Nipissing-Timiskaming	

It should be noted that these forecasts are based on vote transfers predicted in EKOS and Nanos polling of 75-90%, including transfers to the Conservatives, and not on perfect (100%) vote-pooling. Hence the exclusion of ridings like Fleetwood-Port Kells, Nanaimo-Alberni, Kenora and Brampton-Springdale. Of course, these results have been generated, like all other hypotheses in this study, based on an essential fixity in both national and local party support patterns, a necessary fiction in any such analysis.

> **The Cullen proposal has the capacity to deliver a victory for progressive forces in 2015 and therefore merits far more serious consideration than it has received.**

However, a tantalizing possibility to consider is that voters might find this form of cooperation, one that possesses many of the virtues of a merger while showcasing left-liberal values like diversity, pluralism and dialogue, a selling point making any party to it more attractive. Similarly, the allied parties could highlight their superior execution of traditionally conservative virtues like the preservation and enhancement of fair competition and consumer choice. Any communications strategy accompanying such a plan would do well to highlight the more progressive nature of the centre-left's alternative to a merger.

More importantly, both the thirty-five new English-Canadians ridings that could be gained by centre-left candidates and the nine that could be lost in Québec are based on a theoretical maximum participation in progressive primaries that is very difficult to envision in the vote-pooling proposal as written. Substantially lower participation rates are a virtual certainty based on the factors outlined above. Strategies to increase these participation rates and other ideas that might improve the efficacy of the Cullen proposal will therefore be canvassed below.

Nevertheless, it is our conclusion that, unlike a party merger, going it alone or third-party vote pooling, the Cullen proposal has the capacity to deliver a victory for progressive forces in 2015 and therefore merits far more serious consideration than it has received.

Proposals for Improvement
While the progressive primaries proposal is the most realistic hope centre-left voters have for preventing Stephen Harper from serving an interrupted thirteen years as Prime Minister, it is doubtful that the Cullen proposal, as presently imagined, could, by itself, transfer the necessary ten seats from Conservative to Liberal or NDP hands. However, some modifications to the

proposal might improve the chances of this taking place by addressing the following areas: (a) participation rates, (b) vote transfer efficiency and (c) partisan breadth.

Participation Rates – Consensual National Coordination
Prior to the 1990s bureaucratization and centralization of candidate selection, led concurrently by the Chretien Liberals in the mid-90s responding to an insurgency of anti-abortion organizing in suburban Toronto ridings and members of the Reform Party seeking to bar explicitly racist individuals from candidacy, Canadian political parties used less coercive means to persuade local organizations to make decisions in accord with national objectives.

Today, Canadians both within and outside its major political parties do not look askance at the radical circumscription of their choices of candidates for nomination through affirmative action targets, centralized vetting processes to determine eligibility or direct candidate appointments by national leaders. In the past, however, efforts on the part of parties' national decision-makers were nearly as effective and lacked the coercive character of current approaches.

Given the political culture factors inhibiting local cooperation... it is our view that some form of national agreement pre-empting full local control would result in a much more successful effort in the elections.

During the twentieth century, party leaders, either directly, or through proxies, would attend important meetings of local party organizations to urge them to make nominating decisions that were part of a coordinated national strategy. Given that the conflation of loyalty to party and support of the leader has only intensified in recent years, it is likely that such methods of exerting influence on local party organizations would be even more effective today. Given this reality, substantially higher local involvement in progressive primaries could be achieved if the party leader and other key officials identified the key ridings in which agreements would be most important and aggressively organized to persuade party members at key meetings to engage in negotiations that they otherwise might not.

In this way, without any technical modification of the Cullen proposal, its efficacy might be substantially increased through national party advocacy at local meetings.

Participation Rates – Coercive National Coordination
The two most successful instances of the type of the type of vote-pooling activity advocated in the progressive primaries proposal that this study investigates are the 1941-51 Liberal-Conservative coalition in British Columbia and the 1997 Socialist-Communist-Radical-Green alliance in France. In both of these cases, jurisdiction-wide agreements were imposed on district-level nomination processes. Given the political cultural factors inhibiting local cooperation identified above, it is our view that some form of national agreement pre-empting full local control would result in a much more successful effort in the elections.

In the 2008, election, the Liberal and Green parties engaged in a small-scale version of such an arrangement, pertaining to only two ridings, Central Nova and Saint Laurent-Cartierville. While this agreement did not alter the election outcome (Green Party leader Elizabeth May failed to win in Central Nova and Dion was in no danger of losing his own district), it illustrates the

portability of a crucial feature of the French agreement to Canada; progressive primaries need not be enacted in all or even most districts to achieve their objective.

While a top-down agreement between New Democrats and other centre-left parties would be national in the sense of being negotiated and implemented by the parties' federal organizations, it would be not only unnecessary but counterproductive to impose it on more than, at most, sixty ridings. An agreement mandating progressive primaries would only need to be in effect in districts where it would be of genuine utility. Ridings that Conservative candidates would be certain to win, irrespective of the configuration of opposition votes, and those they would be certain to lose could either be left to decide for themselves whether to institute such a system or even prohibited from doing so. In this way, all parties subject to national agreement could still field a substantial slate covering 250 or more ridings, enabling the vast majority of their supporters to cast a vote for them and enabling their leaders to conduct truly national campaigns.

Of course, such coordination would necessarily arise from successful negotiations at the national level between the leadership groups of the NDP, Liberals and/or Greens. Given that the Greens and Liberals have set a precedent in doing so, this may be more feasible than it appears at first blush. Furthermore, it is also doubtful that the progressive primaries plan, as written could be implemented without national agreements supplementing local arrangements.

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In addition, it is worth noting that, in English Canada, the risks associated with an arrangement like British Columbia's 1941-51 Coalition that protected incumbents and placed shared resources behind them are far less due to the dire situation in which centre-left parties find themselves at present. At present, Greens, New Democrats and Liberals, together, hold a mere seventy-two of 233 ridings, a number that vote-pooling could increase by as much as 50%. There seems no danger of the NDP's forty-four MPs crowding out the Liberal Party's twenty-seven, especially given that the overwhelming majority of seats that vote-pooling would likely deliver to centre-left forces are ridings that Liberals are better-positioned to win.

Participation Rates – One-Stage Nominations
As noted above, high rates of membership disparity between parties might discourage participation in progressive primaries in crucial areas. In addition, the two-stage nomination process might also reduce the efficiency of vote-pooling on the part of voters; the more a unity candidate is perceived as representing just one of the allied parties, the lower rate at which supporters of other parties are likely to transfer their votes. As a key selling point of progressive primaries over an organizational merger is their higher efficiency at maintaining the support of those currently planning to vote against the Conservative Party, single-stage nominations may be an important ingredient in their success.

With multiple candidates from each party participating in a single-stage, multi-round nominating convention, populated by members of all parties, it would be in the interest of all candidates to solicit the support of members of all parties, rather than just their own and to forge alliances across partisan divides. A single-stage nomination meeting would produce incentives for every candidate's campaign team to include prominent members of all parties and to sign-up members through all participating organizations. In addition, the increased likelihood of multiple rounds of voting would increase the utility of reaching across partisan divides so that eliminated candidates from one party might endorse candidates from another.

In this way, a simpler, shared nomination process would serve to reinforce rather than undermine the tentative cross-partisan links fostered through local negotiations.

Vote Transfer Efficiency – Party Labelling
The 75-90% vote transfer efficiency cap observed in the second preference polling by Angus Reid and Nanos could be effectively removed thanks to changes in electoral law imposed by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Figueroa case (2003) brought by the Communist Party of Canada. The CPC successfully argued that the requirement to field a minimum of fifty candidates each election to maintain a party name on the ballot violated Canadians' charter rights. Since that time parties have been able to register ballot names with as few as two candidates.

The registration of paper parties under the names NDP-Green, NDP-Liberal, and NDP-Liberal-Green could describe candidates nominated in progressive primaries in ways that identified them with centre-left voters' first rather than second or third choice.

This opens to Canadian political parties the opportunity to return to hyphenated candidate labels, used until the 1970s, to identify candidates nominated by multiple parties. For most of Canada's political history, voters enjoyed the opportunity to cast votes for Liberal-Conservative, Liberal-Labour, Liberal-Progressive and other kinds of multiply-nominated candidates. The registration of paper parties under the names NDP-Green, NDP-Liberal, and NDP-Liberal-Green could describe candidates nominated in progressive primaries in ways that identified them with centre-left voters' first rather than second or third choice.

Partisan Breadth – Bloc
While progressive primaries promise to deliver a massive potential windfall in representation in English Canada, the Bloc factor does not merely make them less effective in Québec but, in crucial areas, counter-productive. Anti-Harper forces could not only defend their hard-won gains more effectively but could achieve a near-shutout in Quebec if Bloc supporters were included in progressive primaries. Given that the BQ has consistently campaigned to the left of the Liberals and often to the left of Greens and New Democrats, there is no reason to endanger existing and undermine further gains in Québec by *a priori* excluding the party.

Given the inclusion of the BQ in the 2008 coalition agreement that caused the prorogation crisis, their exclusion as a junior partner today makes little sense. Indeed, it is possible that Jack Layton's steadfast support of working with the Bloc, in the face of Liberal cowardice and backtracking, was a crucial factor in earning him the trust of Quebeckers between 2008 and 2011. And a retreat from this position might well undermine the province's new confidence in New Democrats as defenders of their interests.

The inclusion of the Bloc in an anti-Conservative electoral alliance would transform the Cullen proposal from a winner in English Canada and a loser in Québec to a winning arrangement for every region of the country.

Partisan Breadth – Other

In 2011, New Democrats made their most substantial gains in two key geographic areas: Toronto's inner suburbs and Québec. These gains arose, in part, from collapse of Liberal and Bloc organizational infrastructure in these areas. While New Democrats enjoyed a level of organization in both places vastly greater than in any election since the realigning election of 1993, there is no organizational zero sum in either place. The combined number of volunteers, donors, members and organizers associated with centre-left parties in these areas is at a multi-generation nadir today, imperilling the staying power of newly-elected progressive MPs.

Anti-Harper forces could not only defend their hard-won gains more effectively but could achieve a near-shutout in Quebec if Bloc supporters were included in progressive primaries.

For this reason, we recommend that the progressive primaries process be modified to include organizations that have a reservoir of experienced, effective activists whose energies could be redirected away from siphoning crucial half-percentages away from progressives in close races and instead into supporting them. The inclusion the Progressive Canadian, Marxist-Leninist and Communist parties in a broad electoral alliance would cost next to nothing and yield a small windfall of votes and a larger windfall of organizers and activists.

Conclusion

Without advocating proportional representation it is impossible for opposition parties to develop a plan capable of pooling all of the support currently enjoyed by New Democrats, Liberals, Greens and others. This study has evaluated the Cullen proposal at length because it appeared, at first glance, to offer the most efficient means of pooling centre-left votes while still maintaining the individual identities and autonomy of the parties involved. Our evaluation confirms that initial impression.

Without advocating proportional representation it is impossible for opposition parties to develop a plan capable of pooling all of the support currently enjoyed by New Democrats, Liberals, Greens and others.

At best, the proposal could transfer as many as three dozen seats from the Conservatives into the hands of centre-left parties, without any increase in popular support, while maintaining current levels of voter choice in more than 80% of federal ridings. At worst, the proposal would function as a dead-letter strategy due to negligible participation by local NDP ridings or intransigence on the part of other opposition parties. In other words, by backing Nathan Cullen's plan, New Democrats have nothing to lose and a government to gain.