

## Canadians and Prohibition: An Analysis of the 1898 Referendum



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

While the American episode of alcohol prohibition (1919-1933) is notorious and has been extensively studied, very little work has been done in a comparative international perspective. Yet, the prohibition movement was international and quite a few countries, particularly the ones with a significant Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority, went through a long-lasting and vigorous struggle over this issue. Our larger research program is concerned with an international exploration to shed new light on the American experiment with prohibition.

In this first paper we examine the Canadian case and more specifically, the national referendum on the prohibition of alcohol of 1898. The story of the temperance movement struggle to suppress the liquor trade can be divided into four phases: the 1840s-50s, the 1870s-80s, the 1890s-First World War and the 1920s. In the two first phases, Canada followed a road very similar to the US. From the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their roads began to diverge as the movement to prohibition intensified in the U.S. while it subsided in Canada until First World War. The 1898 referendum was thus a turning point in the Canadian history of alcohol regulation.

Referendums are a very interesting tool to capture the preferences of a population. As Blocker (1976) argues, referendums were the best indicator of the population prohibitionist sentiments and preferences as they were direct single-issue processes compared to a political party or representative platform. In Canadian politics, they are a rarity as they run against the fundamental principle of British representative government. In fact, there have been only two national referendums in Canadian history: this plebiscite on the prohibition of alcohol in 1898 and the infamous one on conscription in 1942.

There is a very rich and abundant American literature, historical and sociological, on the temperance and prohibitionist movements. There are however very few empirical studies using econometrics to test their determinants.<sup>1</sup> In order to explain the prohibitionist preferences of the Canadian population, we perform a multivariate analysis to investigate the determinants of the 1898 referendum outcome by electoral district. In line with the literature, we control for religious

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<sup>1</sup> We found a few public choice empirical studies for the U.S.: Goff and Anderson (1994); Munger and Schaller (1997); Hersch and Netter (1989); and Wasserman (1989 and 1990). The first two contrast the support for prohibition in 1917 (Congress votes) to the repeal in 1933 while the third is concerned with the timing of adoption of state wide prohibition before 1919. Wasserman analyzes two referendum votes in Missouri and in California in 1918. To our knowledge, there is none for Canada.

affiliation, provincial fixed effects and other demographic characteristics of each district. Our preliminary results confirm the historical and sociological literatures on the temperance. For instance, they indicate that electoral districts which were less likely to vote in favour of the prohibition were populated by more Catholic, less married men, were less densely populated, and situated in Quebec.

Next section summarizes the main features of the history of the prohibition issue until the 1898 Referendum. Section 3 shows the referendum outcome. Section 4 presents the dry and the wet camps while section 5 outlines the specification and estimation results.

## 2. THE ROAD TO THE 1898 REFERENDUM

**Table 1**  
**A Chronology of Events in Canadian Temperance**

1807	First temperance society in North America
1827	First temperance society in Canada, Montreal
1838	Start of temperance work in Quebec by Father Chiniquy
1856	First non-wartime provincial Prohibition in Canada, New Brunswick
1864	<i>Dunkin Act</i> passed, allowing for local option votes on Prohibition
1874	First Women's Christian Temperance Union meeting at Chatauqua, New York, later in Owen Sound, Ontario
1876	Founding of Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic
1879	<i>Canada Temperance Act (Scott Act)</i> passed, allowing for easier Prohibition votes
1895	Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic appointed in 1892 recommends against national Prohibition (majority report)
<b>1898</b>	<b><i>Canada-wide plebiscite on Prohibition won, but Prohibition refused by Laurier</i></b>
1915-17	Prohibition introduced in all provinces because of wartime
1917	National Prohibition imposed under <i>War Measures Act</i>
1918	<i>War Measures Act</i> ends: Prohibition ends in Quebec but not in other provinces
1921	Prohibition defeated in British Columbia
1923-29	Prohibition defeated in all provinces but Prince Edward Island
1948	Prohibition ends in Prince Edward Island, the last hold-out
1967	Activities of Canadian Temperance Federation and Ontario Temperance Federation cease

**Source:** Taken from Smart and Ogborne (1996: 41); bold on 1898 added.

In Canada as in other new countries, pioneer days of late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> century were days of heavy drinking. Alcohol consumed was mostly in the form of “ardent spirits” like rum and whisky, which according to the data available were consumed in a much larger volume than today by the male population.<sup>2</sup> The temperance movement arose out of concerns that this behaviour was evil for the individual and disruptive for society. At both levels, the movement was focused on salvation. The first temperance societies were established in Canada in the 1827, not long after the U.S. They were led by Protestant, especially the Evangelical denominations as part of revivalism.

From the 1840s, a number of organizations and societies crossed to Canada from the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Abstinence pledges were very popular across British North American colonies as in the U.S. Maine was the first state to adopt prohibition in 1851. New Brunswick (then a British Colony) followed Maine’s example in 1856, along with a number of American states.<sup>4</sup>

The temperance movement subsided during the Civil War in both countries although the Province of Canada (then Ontario and Quebec) passed the *Dunkin Act* in 1864 allowing local option votes for prohibition. The revival of the movement was launched in the U.S. with the notorious *women’s temperance crusades* of 1873-4 in which thousands of women kneeled, sang and prayed in front of saloons all over the country but mostly in the Midwest. This led to the formation of a new organization, quite important in the women’s movement, the WCTU (Women Christian Temperance Union) in 1874 in the U.S. and in Canada.

Two years later in 1876, the umbrella organization, the Dominion Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Trade, was set up. Even if the ultimate goal of the Dominion Alliance and the WCTU was nationwide prohibition, the main policy they fought for and obtained in that second wave were the so-called *local option* bills. The federal government passed the *Dominion Temperance Act (Scott Act)* in 1879. It allowed local (county, city or township) bans on sales of alcoholic beverages following a poll taken at given intervals after a specified proportion (usually

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Noel (1995) and Smart and Ogborne (1996). Water was dangerous, tea and coffee expensive and the times and work to accomplish were hard.

<sup>3</sup> The most notable were, in chronological order, the Washingtonians (1840-49), the Sons of Temperance (formed in 1842 in the US, spread to Canada in 1847) and the Order of Good Templars (set up in 1850 in the US, 1855 in Canada).

<sup>4</sup> 12 states: with the Civil War, most of these bans were repealed, leaving only Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire by the end of the 1870s.

¼ of qualified electors) of the population signed for it. Quite a large number of polls were taken over the subsequent decades in Ontario and in the Maritimes and very few in Quebec. About half of them dried up the concerned counties.<sup>5</sup>

For the temperance movement, local prohibition was better than nothing but still unsatisfactory because alcohol remained quite present in Canadian society and enforcement was difficult. They kept pushing for total prohibition. Year after year from the mid-eighties, resolutions like the following were moved in the House of Commons:

“That the object of good government is to promote the general welfare of the people by a careful encouragement and protection of whatever makes for the public good, and by equally careful discouragement and suppression of whatever tends to the public disadvantage.

That the traffic in alcoholic liquors as beverages is productive of serious injury to the moral, social and industrial welfare of the people of Canada.

That despite all preceding legislation, the evils of intemperance remain so vast in magnitude, so wide in extent, and so destructive in effect, as to constitute a social peril and a national menace.

That this House is of the opinion, for the reasons hereinbefore set forth, that the right and most effectual legislative remedy for these evils is to be found in the enactment and enforcement of a law prohibiting the importation, manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes.”

Similar resolutions were moved again in 1887, 1888, 1889, 1891 by M.P. Jamieson. Interestingly, amendments were added to make sure that public opinion would follow. For instance, the 1884 Foster resolution above was adopted (122 to 40) after the amendment: “and this House is prepared, so soon as public opinion will sufficiently sustain stringent measures, to promote such legislation, so far as the same is within the competency of the Parliament of Canada.”<sup>6</sup> Again the resolution in 1889 was adopted (99 to 59) following an amendment that “prohibition should be enacted when public sentiment was ripe for the reception and enforcement of such a measure.”

In the discussion around the 1891 resolution, an amendment was carried in favour of the appointment of a royal commission to obtain information relating to the subjects of the liquor traffic and prohibition. The Royal Commission of five members chaired by Sir Joseph Hickson

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<sup>5</sup> In the decade of the 1880s, 29 out of 69 polled counties went dry in Ontario; 42 out of 47 in the Maritimes 8 out of 17 in Quebec and 2 out of 2 in Manitoba. Smart (1996:42).

<sup>6</sup> G.E. Foster in the House of Commons, 1884. Source: Royal Commission 1895, minority report p. 690.

was appointed in 1892 with this mandate. Three years later, the majority of the Commission (four of five: Reverend McLeod produced a minority report) concluded that:

“With the power possessed by the various provinces to legislate in respect to the traffic, the certainty that in some of the provinces Prohibition would meet with determined opposition; with an open frontier such as the Dominion possesses, largely bordering on States in which sale would be carried on; the undersigned consider that it is illusory to anticipate that a general prohibitory law could be enforced with any reasonable degree of efficiency.”<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, four provinces ran referenda whose results were quite encouraging for the temperance movement:

		For	Against
Manitoba	1892	19 637	7 115
PEI	1893	10 616	3 390
Nova Scotia	1894	43 756	12 355
Ontario	1894	192 489	110 720

**Source:** Hayler (1913: 254)

In the 1896 general elections, Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party were put in power after an almost uninterrupted Conservative reign of 30 years. A plebiscite was in the Liberal party platform (seemingly since 1893). As soon as Laurier set foot in the House as P.M., he was reminded of his electoral promise. Reminders were to be repeated for another two years before Laurier finally acted after he suavely replied on April 13, 1898: « le cabinet est unanime et se fera un devoir de tenir les engagements que le parti a pris lors de la convention de 1893. »<sup>8</sup> The Act of the Plebiscite on Prohibition [61 Vic c 51] was sanctioned on June 13 and the Governor General’s proclamation on August 4<sup>th</sup> fixed the date of the referendum at Thursday, September 29, 1898.

In order to find out what kind of campaign took place in those two months before the referendum, we searched through seven newspapers across Canada. Table 2 shows the results of our investigation: the number of ads and messages pro and against prohibition, the calls for meetings and the number of articles and letters on the issue. Almost everywhere, with the

<sup>7</sup> Royal Commission Report 1895, p. 503. Given the technology and resources available in the 1890s, the product is very impressive. We found complaints at the House of Commons following the deposition of the report that the costs (at close to 100,000\$) were too high.

<sup>8</sup> House of Commons Debates, April 13, 1898, pp. 2856-2859.

exception of Halifax, there was very little of all this in August. Most of them were concentrated in the last week before the referendum as can be seen from the figures in brackets (September 19 to 29). It thus looks like a short campaign and one with a rather mild fervour and intensity, especially in Montreal compared to Toronto (*Globe*) and Winnipeg.<sup>9</sup> Letters and articles were well balanced, presenting the two sides of the issue. Ads were typically more on material than on moral grounds. A good example is figure 1 below from *La Presse* of September 28.

Out of curiosity, we also compiled in the last columns of table 2 the numbers of ads concerning drinking (curing drunkenness and toxicomania, beer, other alcoholic beverages and non alcoholic beverages like water and sodas). Some interesting cultural diversity appears. There are almost daily ads on curing drunkenness in *La Presse*, and almost none at all outside Quebec while there are much less ads on water and sodas in *La Presse* as compared to the other dailies.

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<sup>9</sup> For another part of our project, we examined some Australian and New Zealand newspapers around a few of their referendums on alcohol prohibition. The difference in quantity and intensity of the material in their newspapers compared to the Canadian ones in 1898 is striking.

**Table 2**  
**The Issue of Alcohol and Prohibition**  
**in Selected Canadian Newspapers**  
**August-September 1898**  
**Total Period and in Brackets [the Last 10 Days]**

Newspapers	Ads, Messages				Ads			
	Anti Prohib	Pro Prohib	Articles, Letters, Etc	Call for Meetings	Curing Drunkness	Beer	Other Alcoholic Beverages	Non Alcoh Water, Sodas
<b><u>Montreal</u></b>								
La Presse	4 [3]	7 [6]	11 [10]	4 [4]	44	28	30 + 10 generic	5
Montreal Star	3 [3]	–	12 [8]	–	6	33	15 + 21 generic	31
Gazette	4 [4]	–	4 [4]	–	22	3	42 + 35 generic	13
<b><u>Toronto</u></b>								
The Globe	6 [6]	7 [6]	33 [17]	7 [7]	4	26	11	20
Daily Mail Empire	1 [1]	–	8 [7]	–	1	10	1	9
<b><u>Winnipeg</u></b>								
W. Free Press	1 [1]	7 [5]	21 [10]	7 [4]	–	44	35	35
<b><u>Halifax</u></b>								
H. Herald	1 [1]	3 [2]	6 [2]	4 [-]	–	6	108	11

**Notes:** The period examined is August 4<sup>th</sup> to September 29<sup>th</sup> (day of the plebiscite) 1898. The total number of issues for each newspaper is 49 since none were published on Sundays. “Generic” means ads by merchants and salesmen offering baskets of different alcoholic beverages without marks identified.



Figure 1

LA PRESSE, MERCREDI 28 SEPTEMBRE 1898

# Prohibition veut dire Taxe Directe

SIR WILFRID LAURIER DIT : Si la Prohibition était appliquée, \$8,230,000.00 de revenu disparaîtraient du coup, et il faudrait les remplacer de quelque autre façon. Or, ou est la source de revenu que nous n'avons pas déjà fait servir ? La Taxe Directe est la seule source possible. —De "Globe" de Toronto, 14 mai 1897.

**Taxe Directe**  
DIT  
**L'Hon. David Mills**

"La plus grande partie de la partie du revenu ne peut, dans mon opinion, n'être compensée que par la taxe directe." — Hon. David Mills, Ministre de la Justice, le Globe du 12 juin 1897.

**...Voici les Chiffres...**  
D'après le discours budgétaire de Ministre, 1898

Données—Ale et Bière . . . . .	\$ 65,945.00
Données—Alcools et Vins . . . . .	2,406,899.81
Accise—Bières et Portiers . . . . .	1,026,682.18
Accise—Alcools . . . . .	4,782,806.19
<b>Perte totale de revenu pour le Canada</b>	<b>8,230,933.43</b>
Revenus Provincial et Municipal	1,400,000.00

(D'après les données rapportées Provinciales)

**Perte totale de revenu annuel \$9,630,933.43**

**Taxe Directe**  
DIT  
**"Le Globe"**

"Le Premier Ministre du Canada a déclaré, et personne ne semble le contredire, que la Prohibition entraînerait la Taxe directe." — Article du Globe, 19 mai 1897.

Le Canada a une population de 5 millions d'âmes ; or, pour prélever les \$9,630,933.43 ou en chiffres ronds les 10 millions de revenus fédéral et provincial que ferait perdre la Prohibition, chaque homme, chaque femme et chaque enfant, vivant dans notre pays, serait appelé à payer, par tête, \$2.00 par année, et les peres de famille auraient à payer comme suit annuellement :

Famille de trois . . \$6.00	Famille de cinq . . \$10.00	Famille de sept . . \$14.00	Famille de neuf . . \$18.00
Famille de quatre . . \$8.00	Famille de six . . \$12.00	Famille de huit . . \$16.00	Famille de dix . . \$20.00

Et \$2.00 pour chaque autre enfant. Et tout cela à part des taxes qu'on paye déjà.

**JOUR DU VOTE : JEUDI, LE 29 SEPTEMBRE 1898**

M. M. X

### 3. THE REFERENDUM OUTCOME

Canadians had to answer yes or no to the following question: «Are you in favour of the passing of an Act prohibiting the importation, manufacture or sale of spirits, wine, ale, beer, cider and all other alcoholic liquors for use as beverage ?». The global results were extremely close: 51 % Yes / 49 % No. Regional disparities were wide: in Quebec the Yes represented 19 % of the votes; in the Maritimes, more than 80 %; in Ontario, 57 %. Table 3 reports the total results by province and table 4 gives us an idea of the distribution of the counties according to their prohibitionist intensity (share of Yes among those who voted). The Yes accounted for less than 30 % of the votes in 75 % of Quebec counties compared to 3 % in Ontario and 0 % everywhere else.

As table 3 shows, the turn out was rather low at 44 % of the enlisted voters with the lowest rates of participation in the West (Manitoba, B.C., Northwest Territories). This was significantly lower than the participation rates at contemporary general elections: 66 % in 1896, 81% in 1900, 74% in 1904.<sup>10</sup> In his official report to the Prime Minister, S. E. Chapleau (1899: vi) noted that the voting appears to have taken place very quietly throughout the country. He added that not only did he not receive any adverse reports from the officers but that some of them wrote about «the complete apathy shown by the electors» in their polls.

After much discussion, the Laurier government decided not to act upon those positive results arguing that less than a ¼ of the population [51 % of 44 %] was not a sufficient proportion for such a drastic legislation to be legitimate and enforceable. Moreover, the P.M. Laurier was said to have been afraid to split the country because of the sharp divide of the vote between French-Canadians concentrated in Quebec and English-Canadians.

Defeated at the federal level, the prohibitionists turned to the provinces. The fiercest battle probably took place in Ontario. In 1902 the Ontario government proposed a provincial prohibition measure conditional on a referendum with a majority in favour at least equal to the majority voting at the last General Election (that is, at least 212 723). The results were 199 749 Yes against 103 548.<sup>11</sup> In fact, prohibitionists succeeded only in the smallest of the provinces, Prince Edward Island in 1902. Large scale prohibition would have to wait for the First World War.

**Table 3**  
**1898 National Referendum Results by Province**

Provinces	Number of Yes	Number of No	Total Votes	# Voters on the List	Yes as % of Votes	Participation Rate	# Districts
Ontario	154 498	115 284	269 782	576 784	57.3	46.8	89
Quebec	28 582	122 614	151 196	335 678	18.9	45.0	65
Nova Scotia	34 678	5 370	40 048	101 502	86.6	39.5	17
New Brunswick	26 919	9 575	36 494	80 296	73.8	45.4	13

<sup>10</sup> Source: Urquhart, Buckley, Leacy ed, *Historical Statistics of Canada* 1983, series Y51-74.

<sup>11</sup> Hayler (1913:255).

P. Edward Island	9 461	1 146	10 607	23 388	89.2	45.4	5
Manitoba	12 419	2 978	15 397	49 262	80.7	31.3	7
British Columbia	5 731	4 756	10 487	35 537	54.6	29.5	5
Northwest Terr.	6 238	2 824	9 062	24 275	68.8	37.3	4
<b>Canada TOTAL</b>	<b>278 526</b>	<b>264 547</b>	<b>543 073</b>	<b>1 202 447</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>205</b>

**Source:** Compiled from the Chapleau Report 1899.

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of the Counties by Province**  
**According to the % Yes among those who voted**

% Yes	PROVINCE								Canada
	BC	Manitoba	N. Bruns.	N. Scotia	Ontario	PEI	Quebec	NWT	
70-100	1	5	7	14	20	5	2	2	<b>56</b>
	20%	71%	54%	82%	22%	100%	3%	50%	<b>27%</b>
50-70	2	2	3	3	51		6	2	<b>69</b>
	40%	29%	23%	18%	57%		9%	50%	<b>34%</b>
30-50	2		3		15		8		<b>28</b>
	40%		23%		17%		12%		<b>14%</b>
0-30					3		49		<b>52</b>
					3%		75%		<b>25%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>205</b>
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100

#### **4. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PROHIBITION**

##### ***The Drys***

What determines the strength of the prohibitionist movement? A number of potential factors to explore can be drawn from the historical and sociological literature on the American case. The first is religion. In Canada as well as in the U.S., the temperance movement was Protestant-based, especially on the evangelical denominations (Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists). Putting aside the considerable controversy on their motivations, there is a consensus that these religious groups were the spearhead of the temperance fight against

drinking.<sup>12</sup> In Canada, evangelicalism represented 40% of the population at the time of the referendum.<sup>13</sup>

We found a very interesting source of information on the differences in the Canadian churches' opinions and moral positions over the issue of alcohol in *The Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic* documents. Out of more than 6,000 questionnaires sent to members from the clergy of all important denominations, the Commission received some 2,465 replies. As can be seen in Table 5, there is a sharp difference in the replies from the Evangelical clergy compared to the Anglican and the Catholic clergy. The difference is also marked in the participation rate.<sup>14</sup>

The second factor is the rural-urban opposition. For a long time following Hofstadter (1955), the temperance movement was seen as the ultimate rural grassroots America's attack upon the big cities full of sin and foreigners. In Canada as in the U.S., it is true that rural areas were more supportive of prohibition while large cities were more opposed. However, this may reflect the difference in the homogeneity of the population between rural and urban settings. Immigrants were concentrated in large cities making them much more heterogeneous. There is a consensus in the literature that the largely WASP middle-class prohibitionist movement was deeply suspicious and hostile to those "low class, low race" new immigrants filling the large cities.<sup>15</sup>

Thirdly, women were on the forefront of the movement in Canada as well as in the U.S. Intemperance was generally a male problem and more specifically a husband problem (Thornton (1991:48). The temperance cause has been linked by many authors to women's

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<sup>12</sup> The temperance movement has been perceived as people anxious to save souls by some or their middle-class status (by others following the notorious Gusfield 1963's thesis), as conservative unable to confront modernity (Hofstadter (1955) or as progressive fighting to transform modern society (for instance, Timberlake (1963) or Tyrrell (1991). The jury is still out.

<sup>13</sup> In Canada, this information is provided by the Census, thus self-reported and covering non-practising as well as practising people. The Census of 1901 also supplied data on the number of communicants as reported by the various churches.

<sup>14</sup> These opinion data confirm the American findings about an opposition between two religious views of the world: the ritualistic and the evangelical (or pietistic) tradition. In the former (exemplified by the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Judaism, Episcopal or Church of England), individuals are expected to conform to a common body of doctrines and sacraments and to a hierarchical structure. In the evangelical tradition, there is no prescribed doctrine and adherents achieve salvation by their individual actions. Struggling for prohibition was such a type of action to get a control over individual lifestyles. See for instance Wasserman 1989: 889-890.

<sup>15</sup> See Morone (2003:302-308); Timberlake (1963:152); Gusfield (1963); Blocker (1976).

suffrage. Since in Canada suffrage was only obtained in 1920, women did not vote in the 1898 Referendum.

Finally, in the U.S., the business support of the movement seems to have been a crucial factor. Scientific management and large *Chandlerian* enterprises reinforced the case against drinking. John Rockefeller, Henry Ford and many others contributed money, speeches and interventions to the prohibitionist cause.<sup>16</sup> To our knowledge, the business involvement was much milder in Canada. But what is found everywhere (in Africa, Europe, America, Australasia), is that upper classes were trying to impose values and restrictions upon lower classes because they considered them to be unable to control themselves.

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<sup>16</sup> See Rumbarger (1989) and Timberlake (1963).

**Table 5**  
**Replies from Clergy (Canada)**

QUESTIONS	Classification of Replies	Roman Catholic	Metho -dist	Presby -terian	Church of England	Baptist	Congre -gational	Others	Total
1.—From your experience and observation as a Clergyman, do you consider the use of intoxicating liquors in any shape as hurtful morally and socially?	Affirmative .....	232	955	385	224	257	34	36	2,123
	Negative .....	70	5	17	172	.....	3	5	272
	Replies indefinite .....	10	5	10	33	1	.....	1	60
	No reply .....	2	1	4	2	.....	1	.....	10
2.—What from such experience and observation is your opinion of the effect of the use, in any degree, of intoxicating liquors on the family and domestic relations, and on the care, education and prospects of children?	Hurtful .....	238	954	380	248	256	35	36	2,147
	Harmless .....	36	4	21	136	1	2	4	204
	No experience .....	.....	.....	1	2	.....	.....	.....	3
	Replies indefinite .....	30	1	9	34	.....	.....	1	75
	No reply .....	10	7	5	11	1	1	1	36
									2,465
3.—From such experience and observation, do you believe that in families where intoxicating liquors are used in moderation, the effect is detrimental to the social and moral habits, the domestic relations and the education and prospects of children?	Affirmative .....	201	949	385	191	255	34	35	2,050
	Negative .....	102	7	21	196	2	3	6	337
	No experience .....	.....	.....	.....	3	.....	.....	.....	3
	Replies indefinite .....	7	6	8	34	1	.....	1	57
	No reply .....	4	4	2	7	.....	1	.....	18
									1,465
Circulars Sent Out	Number	2 026	1 646	961	952	616	108	186	6 495
	In % of Total Sent Out	31.2	25.3	14.8	14.7	9.5	1.7	2.9	100
Replies Received	In % of Total Sent Out	15.5	58.7	53.3	45.3	41.9	35.2	22.6	38.0
	In % of Total Received	12.7	39.2	16.9	17.5	10.5	1.5	1.7	100
Population (1891 Census)	In % of Population	41.2	17.5	15.6	13.4	6.3	0.6	5.5	100

**The Wets**

As we saw above, both the Roman Catholic and Church of England churches found prohibition too extremist a measure. They both favored moderation instead of prohibition and mostly stayed away from the prohibitionist movements. In the 1901 Census, Catholics represented more than 40% of the population and Anglicans another 13%. This component of the *Wet* camp was thus especially important in the 1898 Referendum with the strong anti-prohibitionist stance of the Catholic French-Canadians (then 30% of the population).

Based on the economic interest rationale, we would expect that all segments of the alcohol industry: brewers, distillers, retail traders would be combative wets. In the U.S., they were organized in powerful associations with very large financial resources. There were also organizations in Canada who sent representatives at the Royal Commission auditions and who were behind some of the advertising against prohibition in the summer of 1898. But as we saw above (table 2), their activities in the 1890s episode seem to have remained at a rather modest level [from our knowledge, still very incomplete at this stage]. Furthermore, the distillers and brewers lobbying activities were aimed at the national or regional levels rather than the local ones.

Finally, what about the consumers of alcohol? They would seem to be a typical Olson latent unorganized group without much political power. There are no consumption data at the district level. But the provincial breakdown in table 6 shows that with the exception of Manitoba, the most heavy-drinking provinces tended to be the least prohibitionist.

**Table 6**  
**Alcohol Consumption in Gallons per Capita**  
**(1891-93: 3 Year Average)**  
**and Rank of the Province in [ ]**

CANADA AND PROVINCES	SPIRITS	BEER	WINE
<i>Canada</i>	0.720	3.598	0.103
British Columbia	1.480 [1]	7.145 [1]	0.466 [1]
Manitoba	0.905 [3]	3.436 [3]	0.063
Nova Scotia	0.434 [6]	1.321 [5]	0.042
New Brunswick	0.581 [5]	1.076 [6]	0.037

Ontario	0.665 [4]	5.264 [2]	0.027
Prince Edward Island	0.257 [7]	0.361 [7]	0.013
Quebec	0.925 [2]	2.705 [4]	0.234 [2]
NorthWest Territories	---	---	---

COUNTRIES	SPIRITS	BEER & CIDER	WINE
<i>Canada</i>	1.0	8.0	0.6
United States	1.3	10.5	0.4
France	1.9	11.0	19.0
United Kingdom	0.9	27.0	0.4
Germany	1.3	18.0	2.5
Russia	1.0	0.9	0.5
Italy	0.4	1.0	16.5
Belgium	1.6	28.5	0.7
Sweden	4.2	6.2	0.4
Australia	1.0	12.0	0.6

**Source:** Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic in Canada (1895) pp.16-24 for Canada and the provinces. To put the Canadian figures in perspective, the second panel reports international figures from a study “Dictionary of Statistics” by M. Mulhall (1892) found in the Royal Commission Report p. 75.

Those were thus the main actors in this confrontation over the proper role of the state concerning the regulation of alcohol. The prohibitionist camp was largely made of Evangelical Protestant rural women, to whom should be added, at least in the US, businessmen preoccupied with efficiency in mass production factories. The opponents to prohibition were to be found in the large cities, in the working class immigrants, among Catholics and Anglicans and unsurprisingly in the brewing and distilling industry.

## 5. MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Following our previous discussion we specify an empirical model where the share of the yes vote in each district is a function of the demographic characteristics to investigate the determinants of the referendum outcome. We consider two possible measures of the



dependent variable. The first one is the share of yes by district among those who voted on the referendum day. However, this measure may be a biased because it does not account for those who abstained. We therefore consider a second measure of the intensity in favour of prohibition defined as the share of those who voted yes relative to all eligible voters. We estimate those two specifications and control for geographical and demographic characteristics of the different districts. Indeed recall that our data is at the district level and not at the individual level. The estimates are reported in Tables 8 (share of yes vote among for who voted) and 9 (share of yes vote among for who are eligible to vote).

Many of the potential explanatory variables of the intensity of the vote are strongly correlated (see table 7). One such variable is the share of the population who belong to the different religious groups. By definition, these shares must sum to one and cannot be all included. Moreover, some religious groups are more prevalent in some districts, or provinces, than in others. For instance, most districts of Quebec are overwhelmingly catholic. Hence, for the sake of clarity, we include two measures of religiosity by district: the share of Evangelists and the share of Catholics. We expect the intensity of the yes vote to increase with the share of Evangelists and to decrease with the share of Catholics. This is indeed the case in a simple regression which includes only those two variables which are both strongly statistically significant [column M1]

Using the share of individuals who self-report that they belong to a particular religious group may not be appropriate because it does not inform us about the religiosity of those individuals. Someone may report being a Catholic but he or she may never attend mass. Such a person is not likely to be influenced by any guideline which is given by the church about how to vote. We address that critique by using the number of people by district as reported by the different churches to construct the share of actual communicants for each religion. As reported in column M3 of Table 8, these two explanatory variables are strongly significant and of the expected sign. It is of interest to note that their effect on the yes vote is much higher than when we use the share of self-reported religion. This is not surprising because communicants are more likely to abide by their church dogma and vote accordingly. Indeed, we are much more likely to observe a higher share of yes votes in districts with more evangelists, who were strongly against alcohol.

However, the estimates obtained from this simple specification are biased because it suffers from omitted variables which surely mattered for the intensity of the yes vote. Given the

diversity of production and consumption of alcohol across the provinces, it would make sense to include provincial dummies as explanatory variables. Moreover, controlling for any provincial effect will allow us to obtain a better estimate of the impact of religion on the yes vote. Choosing Quebec as the reference province we find that all provinces, with the exception of British Columbia and Ontario, are consistently more likely to vote in favour of prohibition. The Ontario dummy is negative and significant unless we account for urbanization and the share of married individuals in each district. However, as neither of those variables is significant, our preferred specification is M4.

By including the share of married men as an explanatory variable we wish to investigate whether married women could influence their husbands' votes. Assuming that women are more likely to be in favour of the prohibition of alcohol, they could lean on their husbands to have them vote yes in the referendum. We are unable to find an effect in the data. In fact the estimate is of the "wrong sign" (negative) but is not statistically different from zero (the T-ratio is very small).

It is of interest to investigate if these estimates are robust when we consider the share of yes vote among those who are eligible. The intensity of religion has the same qualitative impact on the share of yes vote among those who are eligible as among those who actually vote. There are however two differences which are of interest. Firstly, urban density has a negative impact on the share of yes votes and secondly a higher share of married men in the district is more likely to generate a vote in favour of prohibition. Hence, using this measure it appears that married women were indeed able to lean on their husbands and influence the vote.

**Table 7**  
**Bivariate Correlations**  
**[All variables are at the district level]**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) % Anglicans	1								
(2) % Catholics	-0,737	1							
(3) % Evangelists	0,556	-0,937	1						
(4) % Married Men	0,254	-0,266	0,259	1					
(5) Density (Population/area)	0,026	0,145	-0,185	0,108	1				
(6) Literacy (% can write)	0,391	-0,3172	0,1786	-0,0122	0,1053	1			
(7) «Wealth» (% stone houses)	-0,047	0,1378	-0,1395	-0,0654	0,4936	0,0629	1		
(8) % Yes/expressed votes	0,537	-0,824	0,803	0,068	-0,206	0,217	-0,197	1	
(9) % Yes/listed voters	0,497	-0,839	0,857	0,209	-0,199	0,116	-0,163	0,9241	1

**Table 8**  
**Share of Yes Among Those who Voted**

Dependent variable: Share of yes vote among those who are voted	Ordinary least square estimates						Quantile
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	
<b>RELIGION</b>							
Self-declared evangelists	0.259*	0.426***					
	1.903	4.013					
Self declared catholics	-0.453***	-0.395***					
	4.217	4.336					
Actual evangelists			0.995***	1.087***	1.058***	1.063***	0.990***
			4.818	5	4.686	4.595	6.604
Actual catholics			-0.617***	-0.508***	-0.525***	-0.527***	-0.505***
			7.55	4.899	4.611	4.634	8.129
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>							
Population density					-0.001	-0.001	0
					1.562	1.5	0.31
Share of married men						-0.052	-0.063
						0.179	0.282
<b>PROVINCES</b>							
British Columbia		-0.044		0.076	0.061	0.059	0.103**
		0.625		1.053	0.795	0.776	1.977
Manitoba		0.122**		0.247***	0.234***	0.231***	0.310***
		2.14		4.083	3.657	3.547	6.479
New Brunswick		0.149***		0.206***	0.196***	0.194***	0.232***
		2.907		3.975	3.688	3.601	6.087
Nova Scotia		0.253***		0.291***	0.281***	0.279***	0.348***
		5.613		6.743	6.278	6.085	9.825
Ontario		-0.107**		-0.003	-0.012	-0.013	0.05
		2.056		0.066	0.235	0.246	1.621
Prince Edward Island		0.355***		0.424***	0.414***	0.412***	0.437***
		7.53		9.967	9.468	8.872	9.012
North West Territories		0.103		0.208***	0.193***	0.191***	0.264***
		1.562		3.338	2.893	2.849	4.853
<b>CONSTANT</b>							
	0.596***	0.507***	0.549***	0.449***	0.467***	0.485***	0.440***
	5.903	5.619	11.824	6.878	6.412	4.051	5.027
<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>							
	205	205	205	205	205	205	205
<b>R-SQUARED</b>							
	0.687	0.875	0.676	0.842	0.845	0.845	

Robust t statistics are reported below the point estimates\* significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

**Table 9**  
**Share of Yes Among Those who are Eligible to Vote**

Dependent variable: Share of yes vote among those who are voted	Ordinary least square estimates						Quantile
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	
<b>RELIGION</b>							
Self-declared evangelists	0.268*** 4.787	0.295*** 5.354					
Self declared catholics	-0.101** 2.28	-0.169*** 3.125					
Actual evangelists			0.784*** 9.906	0.819*** 8.505	0.803*** 7.996	0.789*** 7.81	0.756*** 11.146
Actual catholics			-0.175*** 5.82	-0.198*** 3.894	-0.207*** 3.725	-0.201*** 3.695	-0.140*** 4.978
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>							
Population density					-0.001** 2.155	-0.001** 2.333	0 0.739
Share of married men						0.162* 1.844	0.188** 2.595
<b>PROVINCES</b>							
British Columbia		-0.127*** 4.197		-0.046 1.534	-0.054* 1.682	-0.051 1.625	0.002 0.064
Manitoba		-0.091*** 3.218		-0.011 0.37	-0.018 0.576	-0.011 0.338	0.061*** 2.871
New Brunswick		-0.001 0.031		0.03 1.15	0.025 0.925	0.03 1.153	0.092*** 5.44
Nova Scotia		0.051** 2.013		0.063** 2.579	0.058** 2.314	0.063** 2.53	0.107*** 6.753
Ontario		-0.089*** 3.479		-0.034 1.518	-0.038* 1.674	-0.037 1.611	0.02 1.444
Prince Edward Island		0.251*** 21.068		0.286*** 19.629	0.280*** 17.704	0.290*** 19.726	0.334*** 33.896
North West Territories		-0.02 0.528		0.05 1.37	0.042 1.098	0.048 1.254	0.086*** 3.52
<b>CONSTANT</b>							
	0.153*** 3.665	0.212*** 4.053	0.167*** 9.405	0.176*** 5.569	0.186*** 5.29	0.129*** 3.315	0.063** 1.999
<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>							
	201	201	201	201	201	201	201
<b>R-SQUARED</b>							
	0.744	0.872	0.753	0.833	0.836	0.838	

Robust t statistics are reported below the point estimates  
\* significant at 10%; \*\* significant at 5%; \*\*\* significant at 1%

## 6. CONCLUSION

There is obviously much work still to be done. For instance, we need a better knowledge of the alcohol industry in Canada. We also plan to incorporate in our model other socio-economic data such as the proportion of foreign-born (to test for the importance of heterogeneity of the population), the proportion of houses built in stone and brick (as a proxy for wealth), the literacy rate (as proxy for education). This paper is thus a first shot at trying to test the literature on that very important issue of alcohol regulation and of the temperance movement. As far as we know, this is a première for the Canadian case. And as we have referendum data for quite a few other countries (such as New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Sweden), we will pursue this type of work in an international perspective.

We chose the 1898 referendum because it was a turning point in the evolution of alcohol regulatory regimes in Canada. This is particularly revealing when compared to what was going on in the U.S. at the same time. As we already pointed out in some previous work on smoking (Alston et al 2002, p. 427), the U.S. Progressive Movement or its specific measures is seldom studied in international comparative perspective. In both the U.S. and English Canada, evangelicalism dominated the religious Protestant landscape. Social reformers in both sides of the border pressed for the same type of government intervention. But the cultural backgrounds and political institutions differed and produced more moderate policies in Canada. A crucial difference was the presence of a significant anti prohibitionist French-Canadian component (30%) which tipped the balance.

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