

NOTES ON SCANDAL: LOBBYING REFORMS AND PUBLIC OPINION IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

Political scandal is a topic that receives wide media coverage and speculation. While political scandals have tendency to set off a firestorm of press coverage, scandals also may have great implications for democracy. A common conversation associated with political scandals has been that of lobbying reforms to reduce undue influence over the policy process. Scandals may also lead to negative feelings about political efficacy and confidence in government institutions which can threaten the democratic health of a polity. Using a combination of original data gathered from provincial news sources in Canada and public opinion from the CES, this study reaches several conclusions. The first conclusion is that political scandals increase the adoption of lobbying policies in Canadian provinces. Political scandals, such as the groundbreaking Canadian Sponsorship Scandal, are also found to have deep implications on political efficacy, confidence in government, and feelings about politicians. Finally, this study suggests that while provincial-level political scandals play an important role in provincial adoptions of lobbying policy, provincial scandals do not impact evaluations of federal politics.