1975 was a change in the Court's reporting practices. Beginning in 1975, the Court reported all of its decisions which facilitates an accurate measure of changes in its docket.

Four specific reasons lay behind the decision to lengthen the project's temporal perspective. First, by extending the data collection to include 23 years of merits and leave decisions long-term trends in the Court's agenda can be determined as well as short-term "issue cycles." Second, the five-year study period coincides with the start of the current "natural court" that began with Justice Major's appointment in November 1992; since the justice's appointment, the Court's composition has remained unchanged. Third, enlarging the study period increases the number of different leave panels, an important distinguishing feature of the agenda process in Canada. The existence of a natural court and stable panels minimizes the problems of insufficient numbers of applications for analysis that would arise from including short-lived, unstable panels and courts with frequent replacement of justices.

A longer study period, finally, facilitates multivariate analyses by including a greater number of leave decisions and merits cases. While this is a general benefit for the project since it increases the likelihood of stable quantitative findings, it is especially important in exploring the strategic choice perspective. A smaller data set would impede the modeling of strategic behavior by the justices similar to what has been done by Boucher and Segal (1995) and by Segal, Boucher, and Cameron (1995) which requires both agenda and merit votes of justices. As the table indicates, the Canada database now involves approximately 2400 leave applications instead of 445 as in the original proposal. A larger number of observations creates more analytical opportunities for the strategic choice perspective. In particular it overcomes the problem of the limited number of merits panels per term and, the fluctuating composition of these panels that would have constrained the original research design.

The project's database was expanded in still other ways. The attorneys' factums on file at the Supreme Court were coded during the 1996 data collection phase so that the analysis could determine the weight, if any, given to the attorneys' "public importance" arguments. These data roughly correspond to the criteria Justice Sopinka suggests tip the scales in favor of granting leave applications in Canada and to the factors Perry identified as important in his interviews with justices and clerks in the United States.