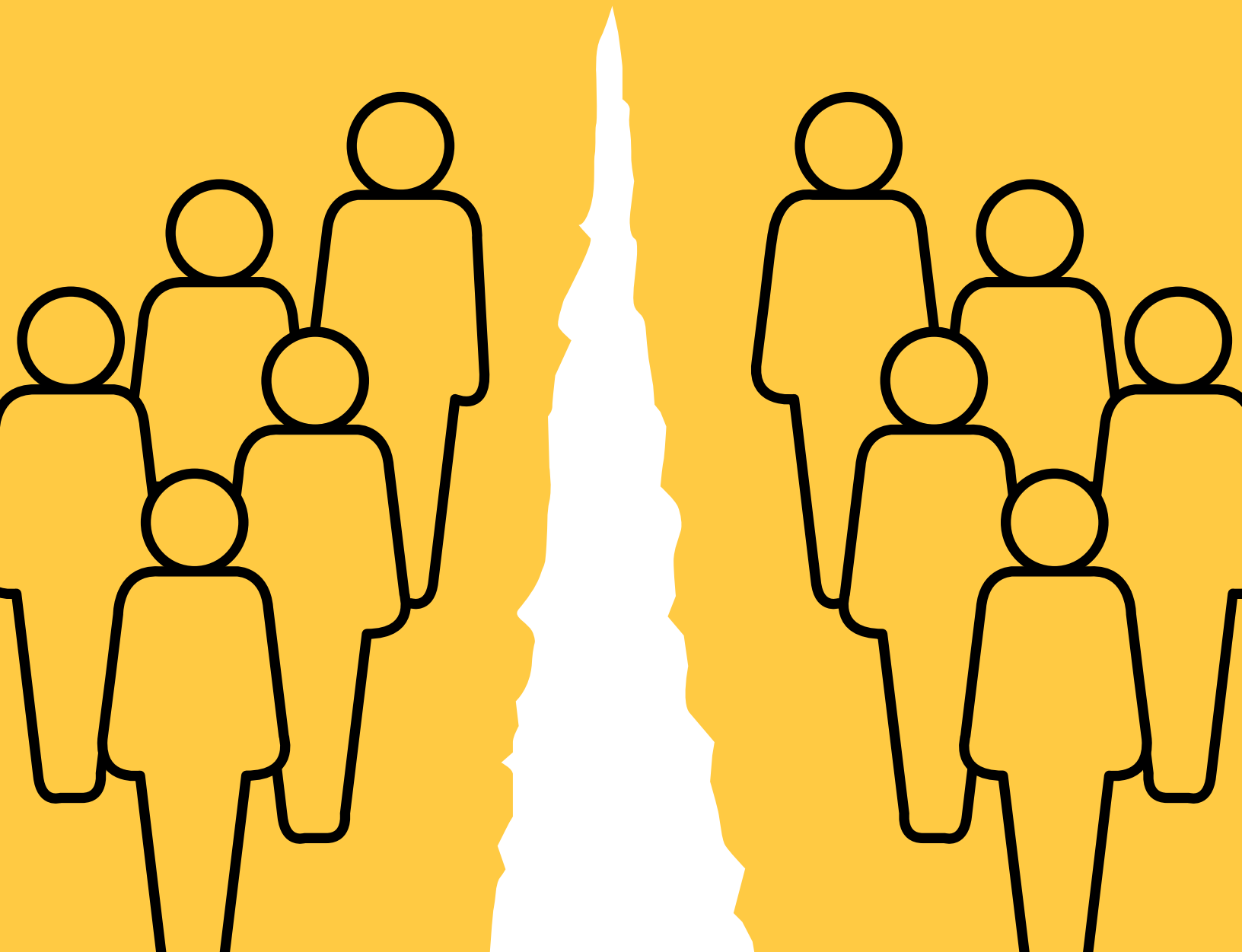


# The Real House Lives

Strengthening the role of MPs  
in an age of partisanship



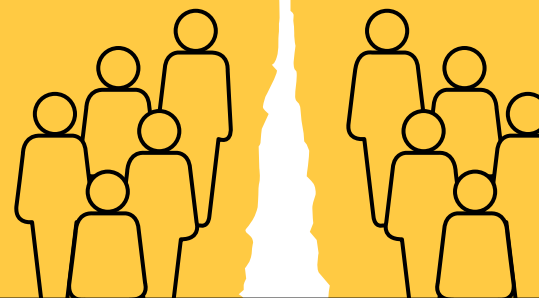
REPORT ONE: MPs IN PARLIAMENT

REPORT TWO: MPs IN THEIR CONSTITUENCY

REPORT THREE: MPs IN THEIR POLITICAL PARTY

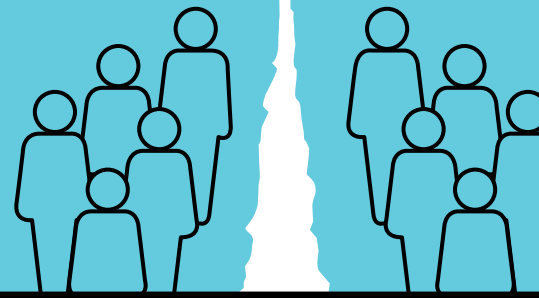
“Empty, nihilistic, repetitive partisanship tires everyone out. It’s exhausting. It’s frustrating. It’s humiliating, sometimes, for those taking part. And it’s alienating for citizens. But—we need strong parties. A more urbane and civil approach to partisanship, but stronger parties ... I don’t think we’re convincing large numbers of Canadians that being part of a political party is going to help them or that they’ll enjoy it or it’ll give them some benefit. Because none of our parties fully reflect the country. The complexity. They don’t engage people. Just as Parliament doesn’t, and our democracy doesn’t to the extent that we would like. **So: less partisanship, stronger parties.**”

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# Introducing Samara's MP Exit Interviews: Volume II



Representative democracy is in trouble.

Trust in democratic institutions has been declining for decades, but recently we've seen how this trend can be mobilized to do lasting damage when leaders amplify that distrust in democratic institutions for their own gain. According to one former Member of Parliament (MP): "We're not just in a sort of post-truth politics, but we're in a post-democratic politics."

In 2018, it's urgent that Canadians rehabilitate representative democracy, as the middle ground between daily referendums and government by unchecked elites. At the centre of representative democracy are the representatives themselves—the critical link between citizens and their democratic institutions.

From 2008 to 2011, the Samara Centre for Democracy conducted the first-ever systematic series of exit interviews with former MPs. In total, 80 interviews took place in the homes and communities of former MPs who sat in the 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments (2004-2011). The discussions formed the basis of a series of research reports and the bestselling book *Tragedy in the Commons*.

In those interviews, we noticed something surprising: Even after years of public service, MPs lacked a clear, shared sense of what their job as political representatives actually was—how they should spend their time and energy to represent their constituents in Parliament and the community. So how can we expect parliamentarians to defend representative democracy if they don't agree on what core purposes they are supposed to serve?

Last year, the Samara Centre, with the assistance of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, again reached out to past representatives, this time to MPs who had sat in the 41st Parliament (2011-2015) and who resigned or were defeated in the 2015 general election. We wanted to understand if the MPs' roles were changing—for better or worse. Once again, parliamentarians opened up about their experiences as representatives in one-on-one interviews that took place in their communities. More than 100 hours of interviews with 54 MPs representing all parties, in all parts of the country, made one thing clear: the problem of a "job with no description" has not been solved. In some ways, it has worsened. Parliamentarians are more cut off from the essential work of scrutiny, legislation, and representation than before. If the work of an MP is hollowed out, elections themselves become hollow. Parliament is degraded, and as one former MP put it: "We don't have a

democracy, outside of that institution.” An intervention is needed.

This report series uses the stories and experiences of former MPs to make the case for a particular vision of political representation—one which is independent, thoughtful, engaged and empowered.

Yes, this is an ambitious view. Yes, this vision requires individuals to step up and share power. But Canadian democracy requires ambition, especially in a public climate of greater polarization, partisanship, cynicism and distrust. Democracy requires Canadians to strive to make it better, and the country deserves nothing less.

Each report in this series will focus on a key setting where all MPs spend significant time and energy. Each report will also share recommendations that advance the specific goals in these settings:



**In Parliament:** MPs—whether from the backbenches of Government or from the opposition—should independently shape law and policy, and take the lead in careful scrutiny of government, rather than going through the motions of debates and scrutiny under direction from their party centres. Check out *Flip the Script*, released in June 2018.



**In the constituency:** MPs should find new and innovative ways to bring citizens into political processes, rather than doing the basic customer service provision that is properly the job of the public service. Check out *Beyond the Barbecue*, released in July 2018.

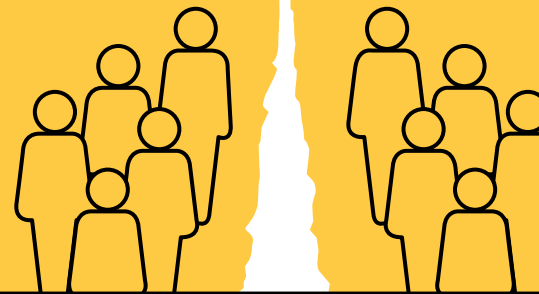


**Within political parties:** MPs should steward their parties, especially their caucuses, to ensure healthy deliberation in private and public, keep leadership accountable, and moderate partisanship, rather than gatekeeping and following the leaders.

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Please follow Samara for future report releases in this series by signing up for our [newsletter](#) and following The Samara Centre on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

# Executive summary



In our representative democracy, parties are essential. They bring diverse voices together to forge a cohesive vision and effect policy change. They support citizens to make sense of complicated issues during an election.

The Samara Centre interviewed 54 former MPs who served in the 41st Parliament from 2011 to 2015. These MPs reported that parties had unquestionably the greatest influence on their time in office, greater than the influence of Parliament or their constituencies. They also reported that their parties were a source of community and support but also enormous frustration.

## KEY FINDINGS



### **Extreme partisanship:**

Former MPs expressed concern that Canadian politics had entered an age of extreme partisanship. Though they are quintessential party people, former MPs regretted the extent to which they themselves participated in partisanship, or were submerged in it.



### **Hollow caucus**

**deliberation:** Party leaders allowed some discussion and debate during caucus meetings. But MPs were divided on its usefulness: some MPs accepted that caucus deliberation was substantive but had to remain out of the public eye, while others argued that caucus meetings were used by leaders for briefing members rather than real consultation.



### **Inability to check party leaders:**

Although MPs held party leaders in awe, they generally saw their leaders at a distance, unless they were part of an exclusive in-group. Members of a party caucus are meant to be a check on the power of the leader. But rather than encouraging meaningful dissent, caucuses often policed and disciplined their own members to stick with the leader.



### **Intense peer**

**pressure:** MPs who were not considered

absolute team players faced incredible pressure within the party, from the leader and through ostracism from fellow caucus members. Some MPs described members who wanted to act independently as working from a point of ego and self-aggrandizement, when they should be serving the party they had chosen.



### **Diminishment of**

**local parties:** The ability of local party

associations to govern themselves, grow the grassroots, and choose candidates varies greatly. For many former MPs, the local party organization barely existed. More than half of interviewed MPs ran uncontested for the party nomination in their community.



### **The “boys (and girls) in short pants” control all:**

Experienced parliamentarians described the growing power and influence of staffers in the leaders' offices. Many MPs were concerned about unelected staffers making many policy decisions, and some even complained that elected representatives were treated as “puppets.”

While Parliament has always been and should remain a partisan space, there are institutional and cultural problems with party politics that have real consequences for the health of our democracy. Fixing them requires further deep examination of the party as a whole, from the grassroots to the leadership. In the interim, MPs should commit themselves to leaving Parliament better than they found it by:

### **Fostering better cross-partisan relations**

When politicians become more polarized, the general public can respond by either turning away in disgust or mirroring that polarization—and meaningful opportunities for civil debate are destroyed. MPs can start to reduce partisanship to healthier levels by taking simple practical steps like:

- Creating informal space in Parliament to permit cross-partisan mingling.
- Mandating financial support for all-party caucuses and parliamentary friendship groups, where members from different parties can champion shared interests.
- Travelling with committees, away from hyper-partisan and hyper-supervised Ottawa.

### **Strengthening the caucus over the leader**

For a strong democracy, it's essential that members of a caucus have leverage over their leader. In the absence of a strong caucus, leaders hold enormous unchecked power without much of a democratic mandate. MPs can start to restore the independent authority of the caucus by:

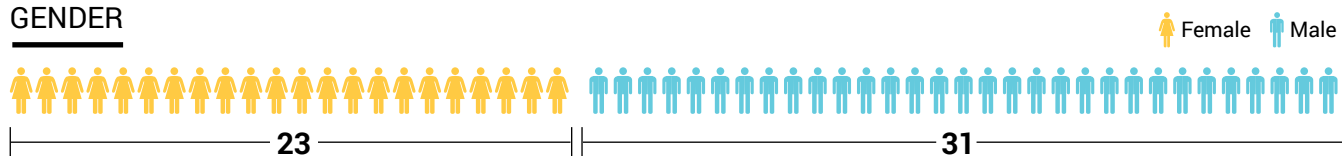
- Organizing formal backbench committees to which the leader must answer.
- Exploring, with other party members, ways to give caucus members a formal role in leadership selection and removal.

## WHO PARTICIPATED? (54 MPs WERE INTERVIEWED)

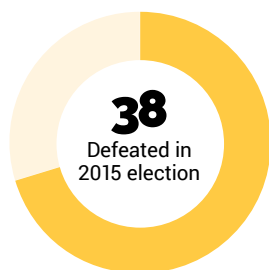
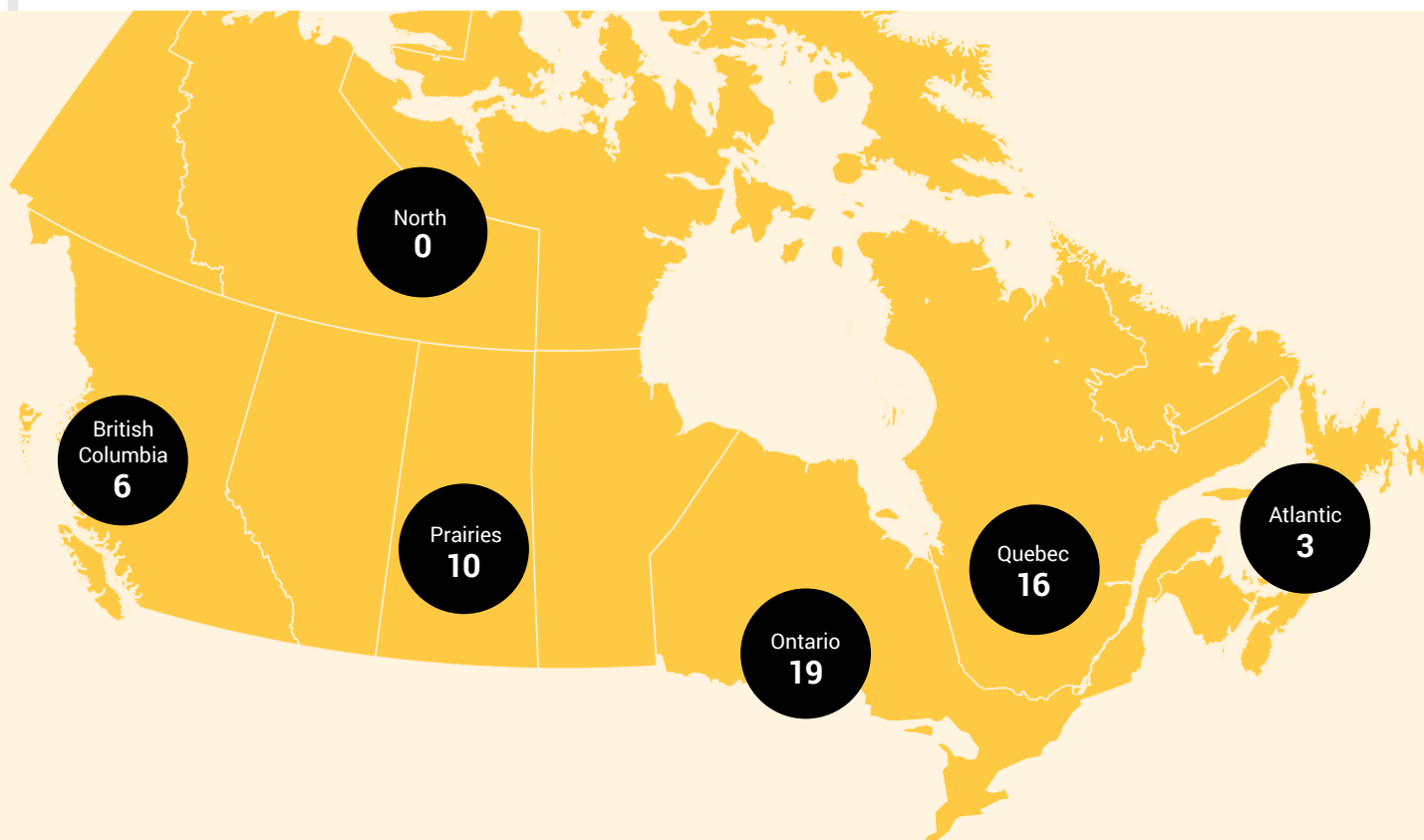
### PARTY



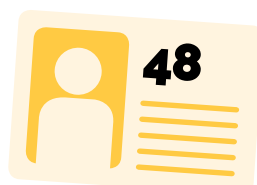
### GENDER



### REGION



AVERAGE AGE AT  
TIME FIRST ELECTED

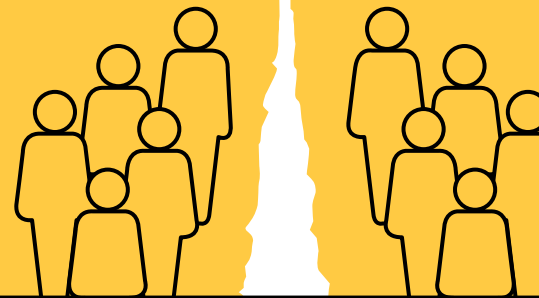


YEARS OF TOTAL EXPERIENCE IN PARLIAMENT





# Introduction



Parliament is a partisan environment—founded on and organized along party lines.

Parties allow individual actors to come together to create platforms and policies. During elections, they control the narrative and allow voters to select candidates more easily. Parties choose the candidates to run in elections and play a large role in getting electors out to vote (for their side, of course).

For candidates and then the MPs who are selected, the party is central to every stage and facet of their career: training, key messages, assignment of roles. They're also integral to their electoral success. Few independent MPs are elected to power.

While parties have always been in opposition to each other—the one side is called “the opposition” after all—privately former MPs tell us that there used to be more collegiality, and a willingness to find a compromise.

But in the last decades parties have become increasingly polarized, with their borders maintained and policed. And we see the results of that decline in collegiality in the House every day, and the increase in polarization and partisanship that has spread from the House to the public.

One long-time politician, who returned to federal politics after years away, was amazed to discover how partisanship had transformed even how MPs socialized:

My wife and I were on a parliamentary delegation to the International Parliamentary Union in Geneva. There was an MP [from another party] there. We were sitting next to each other. And I said, “Would you like to have dinner tonight?” He said, “Sorry, I can’t. We’re busy.”...

About an hour and a half later, he phoned me in my hotel room and said, “Are you still free for dinner?” “Absolutely” ... During the dinner, it came out—he basically said, “We’ve been told not to have dinner with you people ... We’ve been told to stay away.”

This is the third report in a three-part series based on exit interviews with former parliamentarians who sat in the previous Parliament. This series looks at the role of the MP as it is—and as it should be. The first report, [\*Flip the Script\*](#), examined their role in Parliament. The second, [\*Beyond the Barbecue\*](#), looked at their role as their local community representative.

This report picks up on the last and arguably most pervasive thread: of the MP as a member of a party. This role moves with them between the constituency and Parliament.

Interviews with over 50 former MPs suggest that the party is a source of deeply conflicting experiences. It provides welcome, friendship, community, security, information, and mission. But it is also the source of enormous frustration. Former MPs describe their party as an obstacle to meaningful work and as contributing to a sense of diminishment, embarrassment, loss of purpose, and even betrayal.

In the words of one former MP:

Empty, nihilistic, repetitive partisanship tires everyone out. It's exhausting. It's frustrating. It's humiliating, sometimes, for those taking part. And it's alienating for citizens.

But—we need strong parties. A more urbane and civil approach to partisanship, but stronger parties ... I don't think we're convincing large numbers of Canadians that being part of a political party is going to help them or that they'll enjoy it or it'll give them some benefit. Because none of our parties fully reflect the country. The complexity. They don't engage people. Just as Parliament doesn't, and our democracy doesn't to the extent that we would like.

So: less partisanship, stronger parties.

This report examines the purpose of parties in a representative democracy, and describes the ideal role for MPs in their parties. It sets out the case for why recent Parliaments have been, according to the interviewees, among the most partisan in Canadian history. It then seeks to understand this state of affairs by exploring MPs' experiences with the party in three dimensions: in the local party, in the parliamentary caucus, and in the office of the leader and with his

or her staff. Finally, it proposes approaches that could help generate positive, appropriate partisanship, strengthen parties in the right ways, and improve Parliament as a democratic forum, and sets out an agenda for future research.

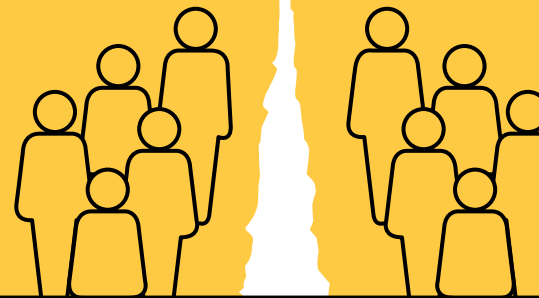
#### **REMIND ME: WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY ANYWAY?**

Canada has 14 registered national political parties, with seven parties represented in the House of Commons. Provinces also have their own parties and party systems, which are at times aligned with the federal party system.

Political parties are not mentioned in our constitution, but they're vital to how our politics works. And also the cause of why it sometimes doesn't. Parties have certain advantages in Canadian law, including access to public funding. Donors to political parties receive large rebates funded from tax revenue, as is the case with charities (though unlike charities, parties can speak freely about politics and engage the public on political issues). Parties also receive large refunds for their election expenses, including money spent on advertising, staff, and travel.

However, it has been estimated that fewer than two per cent of Canadians are members of a political party at any given time.<sup>1</sup>

# The job description: MPs in the party



A healthy representative democracy requires MPs who are independent and empowered, thoughtful and engaged. Those values should be reflected in all domains of MPs' work.

## **This means that:**

- In their parliamentary party, MPs should act as a check on the party leadership. They should work with colleagues to ensure the caucus meeting is a site of true deliberation, a democratic forum, and a venue for deliberation, compromise, and the crafting of a cohesive vision.
- As elected representatives, MPs should ensure legislative and regulatory oversight of parties, to guarantee that all parties are healthy, positive contributing actors in Canadian democracy. This will ensure parties can play a vital role as a link between citizens and formal politics.
- As parliamentarians, MPs should work constructively with members from all parties, to improve the quality of decision-making.
- As party actors, MPs should help local party members keep the riding association strong and active, so that the party is a true on-ramp to politics for engaged citizens, and not just for insiders.

MPs are uniquely positioned to help return national political parties to their essential democratic functions.

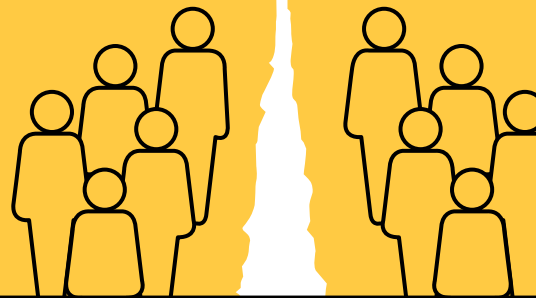
## **WHY BOTHER WITH POLITICAL PARTIES?**

While they are often a source of dissatisfaction, political parties serve numerous indispensable roles in a large representative democracy. Parties:

- Structure the vote, providing citizens with information and a menu of basic options to choose from at election time;
- Structure Parliament, coordinating the actions of individual MPs and allowing a Government to be formed and held accountable;
- Recruit candidates into public life;
- Select leaders, some of whom will become prime ministers and leaders of the opposition;
- Educate and engage citizens;
- Come up with new policy ideas and solutions; and
- Provide opportunities to members to participate in and influence parties' direction.

Parties are unrivalled in their reach, breadth, and ability to connect citizens to politics. As a result, the health of our democracy is fundamentally linked with the democratic health of parties.

# Keep it in the family: How MPs describe life in the party



In the exit interviews, former MPs were given open-ended opportunities to talk about their experiences within parties. The interviews probed opaque areas of party life that usually escape public attention—like what goes on behind closed doors in parliamentary caucus meetings. The following section first describes partisanship as it was experienced by interviewed MPs. It then examines the ways that MPs interact with three faces of the party: the local party, the caucus, and leaders' offices.

## **PARTISANSHIP: "MUST DIE ON EVERY HILL!"**

The party is many things in the life of an MP. It's an institution, a social group, a forum, an authority—it's also a state of mind. And the story of recent Parliaments in Canada is a story of partisanship. In fact, there was a strong consensus among MPs that partisanship has recently reached often silly, sometimes dangerous levels. And though they are partisans almost by definition, MPs expressed real regret about the extent to which they themselves participated in partisanship, or were submerged in it.

There is always the danger of "golden age-ism"—of imagining politics was better in some quainter, simpler past. But there is real reason to believe that our politics has become more specifically partisan than ever in recent years.

Former MPs certainly see it that way. "Partisanship was really at a toxic level during the Harper years," said one, echoing a broad consensus.

MPs expressed real regret about the extent to which they themselves participated in partisanship, or were submerged in it.

## THE AGE OF PARTISANSHIP

Canadian politics has always been structured around heated partisan divides. But a compelling argument can be made that in recent years, the Canadian House of Commons has become more polarized along partisan lines than ever before.

In the late 19th century there was intense political conflict, but the parties themselves were looser affiliations of MPs who demonstrated considerable independence. John A. Macdonald complained about the “loose fish” in his own caucus whose votes he could not count on.<sup>2</sup> The early and mid-20th century saw more disciplined and unified parties, but also strong norms around civility. When Lester Pearson slipped a brief criticism of the Conservatives into his first speech to Parliament, he was reprimanded by senior members of his caucus and he promised not to do it again.<sup>3</sup> And the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties, which dominated elections, competed with each other but did not show strong or stable ideological differences.<sup>4</sup>

Recent decades have seen profound change in the nature of party conflict. Political scientists systematically studying election platforms observe that Canadian parties have become more ideologically polarized, with growing distance between the policies and approaches of parties on the right and left.<sup>5</sup> Public opinion research suggests Canadians also notice stronger ideological

differences between the parties.<sup>6</sup> Voters for a given party have become more like-minded and ideologically homogenous than before, with growing gaps between voters for parties on the right and left.<sup>7</sup> Survey data also finds that partisans have more negative feelings toward other parties than they did in the recent past (**Figure 1**).

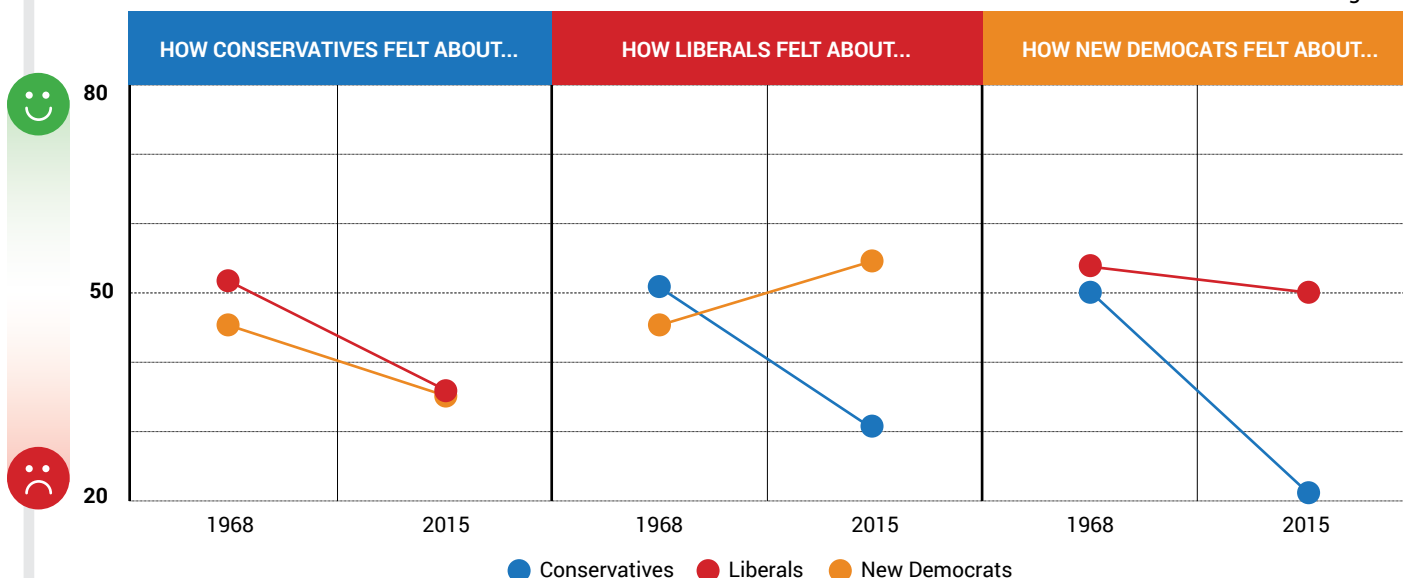
At the same time, parliamentary parties are as centralized and disciplined as ever, and former MPs describe a breakdown in cross-partisan relations in the House of Commons. Empirical analysis also finds that types of parliamentary activity that used to be outside of partisan conflict, like the one-minute “SO31” members’ statements that MPs can make on nearly any subject, are increasingly more commonly used for partisan purposes.<sup>8</sup>

Extensive research and journalism have documented the phenomenon of “elite polarization” in the United States, where politicians and engaged citizens split ever further into two camps, becoming more hostile to compromise, and contained to their own closed media environments. This has had massive impacts on politics and society in America.

While Canada has not experienced this phenomenon to nearly the same extent, there is ample evidence of elite polarization here too. Canadian politics has entered a unique age of partisanship.

### CHANGING PARTISAN ATTITUDES

Figure 1



MPs whose experience of Parliament stretched further back commented on this change as well. One MP, who had sat in Parliament in the late 1970s and early 1980s, recalled a comradery that used to transcend party lines and no longer does:

I found the House when I got back was actually quite disappointing in a lot of ways ... [Previously] there was quite a lot of humour in the House. Quite genuine humour. A lot of heckling and back and forth—I can remember being heckled mercilessly in my maiden speech ... [but] at the end of it, they all came over and said, “You did great. You’re welcome.”

That clubbiness has largely disappeared. Instead, an MP recalled being given instructions from their staff about where to sit in the parliamentary dining room, and what not to talk about in the presence of MPs from other parties. “I was severely chastised for fraternizing with the enemy,” asserted another MP.

Different MPs offered different explanations for why this change had taken place. Some saw it as a long-term change which began in the early 1990s when new, more ideological parties appeared. Others saw the 41st Parliament as particularly bad because it came on the heels of several tense minority governments: “That was some hangover from the minority [Parliament] of ‘must die on every hill!’ Guys, I don’t have the energy to die on every hill. Can we just agree to fulfill our roles in this theater and then go home?”

Interviewees commonly attributed that brutal partisanship to the other members. One MP, a drummer, recalled wishing he could jam with some musicians from other parties, but: “Couldn’t get the partisanship out of these guys, right?” According to another, remembering an MP whose office was near their own: “We tried to strike up a friendship and it did not go well. Because I was like, ‘Oh my God, this woman. Why can’t she just have a normal conversation? Why is it like so black and white and aggressive?’”

One MP actually admitted as much about themselves—expressing bafflement at how more experienced members could compartmentalize the public conflict that politicians engage in:

“Guys, I don’t have the energy to die on every hill. Can we just agree to fulfill our roles in this theater and then go home?”

What I didn't like is one minute you're attacking one another during committee and then the cameras are off and it's, "Hey, let's go for a beer." And I'm not built like that. I'm not built like that. So, I had a very hard time when I first got there, because I'd be like, "What do you mean go for a beer? You just called me a liar. You just called me a liar during committee. I don't want to go for a beer with you." ... And they don't take any of those things personally.

It's a completely different world from what I'm used to ... My opposition members would say, "Hey, let's go for a drink." I would be like: "I don't like you."

## "SIT IN THE SAUNA AND TALK ABOUT THINGS"

Regret about the state of partisanship was widely and equitably shared across interviewed members from all parties. Indeed, many MPs recounted fleeting moments of non-partisanship and cross-partisanship as among their fondest memories of Parliament. For example, one Conservative MP, recalling spending time with former leaders of the NDP and Bloc Québécois at the gym: "We're all sweating, and you got family, and you got issues, and [we] sit in the sauna and talk about things."

Another MP recalled with pride the relationship they built with two MPs from different parties who participated on the same TV debate panel:

The three of us were on a political panel on TV together for I don't even know how many years. And we did our jobs representing our parties. And we developed a deep friendship that continues ... I did this panel with them and we would occasionally go out for drinks and it humanized them. Demonstrating from time to time your personal integrity of ... "I'm not going to say that line. That line that the party's giving me, it's too far. I'm not going to say that line." It doesn't mean you're betraying your caucus or betraying your party, but there are certain things you don't have to go that far.

Small non-partisan gestures had a lasting impact. One interviewee recalled her francophone debate counterpart from another party taking time to compliment her use of French: "that's pretty special stuff, you know?"

"What I didn't like is one minute you're attacking one another during committee and then the cameras are off and it's, 'Hey, let's go for a beer.'"

Many MPs recounted fleeting moments of non-partisanship and cross-partisanship as among their fondest memories of Parliament.



## SEEKING COMMON GROUND

When asked how to transcend partisanship and foster relationships across party lines, MPs gave similar advice. They did not talk about procedure or process, committees or all-party caucuses, but about the social dimension of Parliament, and building informal relationships away from bright lights and official work.

One MP, widely noted for their ability to maintain cross-partisan friendships, advised: “MPs should either learn to play soccer, learn to curl, learn to run, or learn to ride a bike,” to take advantage of the Parliamentary sports scene and the mixing it permits.

Another recalled trying to turn a bitter adversary into a colleague by trying to meet in a purely social setting (with modest returns):

[She] tested me because she was always screaming and erupting during meetings.... Actually, what I ended up doing, on the suggestion of a colleague, is going out for dinner with her.... It helped a little ... rather than only seeing her at the table, have a little more of a rapport or some sort of social interaction with her.

This was strategy for another MP, too:

What are the four fuels that fuel the House of Commons? They are booze, caffeine, testosterone, and ego—we need more estrogen in the House of Commons. And so, how did I work across party lines? I allocated money out of my own pocket, not my MP budget, to do beer, single malt scotch, coffee, dinner, lunch, with people from all parties. “Hey man, can I buy you lunch? Can I buy you a beer and talk about X?”

## “I WILL NOT LOOK YOU IN THE EYE AND LIE TO YOU”

While some insisted they tried, few MPs had stories about close friendships with members from other parties. But a small number of powerful stories did emerge. One younger female MP described how she built a relationship with a younger female MP from another party, and used that relationship to influence the political discourse for the better:

“MPs should either learn to play soccer, learn to curl, learn to run, or learn to ride a bike,” to take advantage of the Parliamentary sports scene and the mixing it permits.

“What are the four fuels that fuel the House of Commons? They are booze, caffeine, testosterone, and ego—we need more estrogen in the House of Commons.”

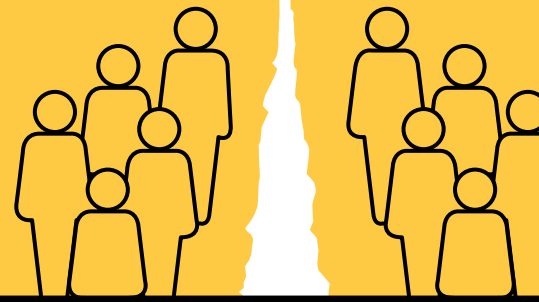
We got together and started a relationship where we kind of established the ground rules for us and how we wanted to conduct business, and we both agreed, "We're going to try and outsmart each other. We're going to try and win everything." But, I said to her, "I will not look you in the eye and lie to you. I will keep things from you, but I'm not going to look you in the eye and lie to you." And we agreed: "Those are the ground rules." And we had a great working relationship. But, in having that working relationship, we also developed a friendship. And that was not based on values. Because come on, we don't agree on much of that. But, it was based on the shared experience of being young women in the House. I found it very hard to go to my older female colleagues for advice because they were of a completely different generation and experiencing different things...

I have called her crying. Just: "I don't know how to fucking deal with this. Can you help me?" ... And I can remember [another time]—she was taking a fucking shit-kicking on social media about something and I asked her, "Do you want me to weigh in?" Because I found that if someone from another party weighed in on something like that, it calmed people down. Because often the people doing the attacking are your own people, right?

The anecdote is a reminder of what's possible even in partisan politics: a shared commitment to positive public life, despite intense political difference. But these stories were rare. So how did we get here? What has produced parties with members who are so intensely bonded to each other, and so remote and hostile to the partisan Other?

What has produced parties with members who are so intensely bonded to each other, and so remote and hostile to the partisan Other?

# The local party: “It’s a kind of fake democracy”



In theory, an office-seeker first encounters their party locally, at the riding association, the community branch of the national party. Members and supporters of a riding association—again, in theory—decide which private citizens become candidates who bear the party standard.

In practice, the stories of former MPs suggest real variance in the extent to which parties have any kind of grounding in community. Riding associations ranged from totally non-existent to energetic recruiters who were the reason people ended up in politics. But in general, and with few exceptions, MPs rarely experienced strong, functioning local party organizations. Much of the recruitment was done by the national parties, most of the interviewed MPs did not have contested nominations, and several of those who did raised questions about the integrity of the nomination process.

The stories of former MPs suggest real variance in the extent to which parties have any kind of grounding in community.

## THE MASS MEMBERSHIP PARTY

Political parties take several forms, both within and outside of Parliament. The “mass” or national party here refers to the party as a national organization of which any Canadian may be a member.

Parties govern themselves, which means rules vary from party to party. In Canada, most parties charge a small membership fee. The benefits of membership include being able to vote in the nomination contests that decide who will be the party’s candidate in a general election, participating in internal party elections for executive positions, and participating in policy deliberation processes that are meant to inform the party’s platform.

The major national parties have riding associations (officially called electoral district associations) in each constituency. Riding associations elect an executive, nominate candidates through competitive elections, and organize the local campaign during an election.

## RIDING ASSOCIATIONS: A PATCHWORK QUILT

In some cases—particularly in ridings where the party had not been successful in recent elections—the riding association existed on paper only. One MP recalled: “I couldn’t find the electoral district association president. It was difficult to find them just to tell them that I would like to run.” Another described the nomination ‘process’ this way: “We didn’t have a nomination, there was no local association—you go and have your paper, sign people, and—whatever.”

At the other end of the spectrum were a few MPs for whom the riding association or other regional party organizations were training grounds. Some former MPs had held positions on riding association boards or had worked for previous MPs from the same party in the constituency office, in some cases for decades.

This could be positive—an opportunity to become familiar with the inner workings of the party and to develop a network before taking the leap to pursue public office. Yet some acknowledged that this deep immersion in the riding association before becoming a candidate created problems for the health of a party’s internal democracy. One MP admitted that when they were seeking the nomination, their position in the local party tilted the playing field: “As the president of the association, I had access to lists. Of course, are you really supposed to have access to lists? Maybe not, but I did ... lists of current members, former members, lapsed memberships, and everything else.”

Between those extremes were MPs who did not have much previous involvement but were actively recruited by the local party. One former MP described how instrumental the local candidate search committee was in bringing them into politics:

I got a phone call from a member of the committee. And I actually thought they were calling me for ideas. And I was really excited to talk to them about who I’d been thinking of ... but she was like, “So, we actually want to talk to you. Don’t say no.... You should talk to your family about it. Talk to your friends. Think about it for a while. Don’t say no. And then I’m going to call you back in a few days or in a week. Don’t say no.” And I was like, “You’re crazy but all right. Sure. Call me back in a week.”

“We didn’t have a nomination, there was no local association—you go and have your paper, sign people, and—whatever.”

“As the president of the association, I had access to lists. Of course, are you really supposed to have access to lists? Maybe not, but I did.”

## RECRUITMENT: "YOU DON'T SAY NO TO JACK"

But among MPs who had been recruited in certain parties, the more common story was of national party figures playing that recruitment role, often stepping into the void left by inactive or non-existent riding associations. Former NDP leader Jack Layton was remembered by several interviewees as a relentless recruiter.

One MP, who was ultimately recruited to run in a riding that had no local party presence whatsoever, remembered:

I was at some event that Jack was also at, and he came up to me. He's like: "Hey. I've been trying to get you to run. I've been watching you. I really want you to run." ... I was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah—I'm not ready." ... And finally, he's like, "You know what?" He bust out a business card. Wrote down a phone number and said, "Here. Call me whenever. When you want to talk, let me know." ...

Two weeks later, I called him. I was like, "Let me just check this out." And I called and he yelled at me... because I called at 8 o'clock in the evening.... He was like, "Why are you calling me right now? Hang up the phone and call me later. Go do something in the community and call me back later." ... It was this: You're wasting your valuable canvassing and campaigning time. There wasn't an election, but he's decided that I'm already a candidate at this point. You don't say no to Jack.

## NOMINATION: "FIGHTING BROTHERS AND SISTERS, OR NOT AT ALL"

Former MPs described several different paths to becoming their party's nominee in the riding. But open, contested nominations were surprisingly rare: 34 out of 54 interviewees ran unopposed and were acclaimed as candidates.

Those who did face nomination battles described an excruciating process. "You are fighting brothers and sisters ... the hardest part of the election campaign," said one MP. Another agreed: "Nominations are the worst part of politics, for the individuals." There appear to be several reasons for this. The first is that the fight is within "the family," a metaphor used by multiple

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"Nominations are the worst part of politics, for the individuals."

MPs who had fought contested nominations. MPs describe this as painful, and likely to turn personal in the absence of any substantive disagreements.

There were also several questions about the process. The administration of nomination elections could be amateurish and volatile. And several MPs raised concerns about who, exactly, was participating in the nomination process. Nominations were not seen as contests for the support of a true mini-public of members committed to the local party. Rather, according to one MP, it was about “the bulk sale of instant memberships, [which makes it] very easy to take over nominations.” Another MP was blunt about the implications of this: “Members never remain members for long, anyway. So it’s a kind of fake democracy.”

## PLAYING THE LONG GAME THROUGH THE LOCAL LEVEL

Former MPs rarely discussed the local riding association after the nomination phase, though the interviews tended to focus on other facets of the MPs’ career and therefore only provide a very partial image of the health of the local party. But some suggested that MPs were failing to uphold a responsibility to their party at the community level. One MP, who had witnessed their party suffer a dramatic electoral loss, suggested that MPs underestimated the importance of the local party: “Some of them could have survived the wave if they had realized that they had a responsibility to keep their riding strong and keep that local organization strong.”

Another MP emphasized their continuing involvement in the local riding association after leaving office, as an investment in the party’s future and a service to the state of public leadership:

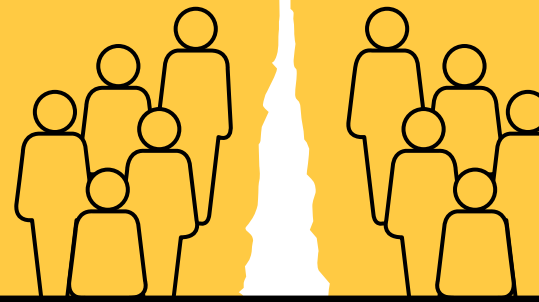
Even today when I’m not anymore an MP, I’m involved in the electoral district association. If you lose an election, that doesn’t mean that the party lost or all the other people who were volunteering for you, they are just gone. You need to have that continuity. [I want to] be able to prepare the next person who is running.

“Members never remain members for long, anyway. So it’s a kind of fake democracy.”

Some suggested that MPs were failing to uphold a responsibility to their party at the community level.

For some MPs, the local party association provided opportunities to experience politics first-hand and prepare for public life before becoming candidates. For others, it facilitated their entry to politics by seeking them out and drawing them in. But for the greater number of MPs interviewed, the riding association—and by extension, the party as a mass national organization—factored little in their entry to politics and their experiences in elected office thereafter.

# Caucus: No sore losers



Upon arriving in Ottawa, MPs' work and social lives become more firmly defined by their immersion in political parties. The primary expression of this is the party parliamentary caucus. The discussions in caucus meetings are closely guarded secrets, inaccessible to outsiders. Exit interviews with former MPs provided a unique opportunity to pry open the caucus black box. They revealed conflicted feelings about the caucus, which serve dual and somewhat paradoxical purposes: to generate solidarity, but also to permit deliberation, debate, and privately expressed independence.

## THE CAUCUS OR PARLIAMENTARY PARTY

The caucus, or parliamentary party, is a group of MPs (and in some cases senators) who belong to the same party. In Canada, the members of each party caucus meet privately on Wednesday mornings, when Parliament is not sitting. The meetings are strictly confidential; only MPs and perhaps a small number of senior party staffers are permitted to attend. Caucus meetings provide opportunities for the leadership to update members on plans, and for members to respond, and to debate among themselves on the party's direction. Several smaller caucuses, such as those organized by region, also meet regularly.

## BONDING: "WHERE I WANTED TO BE"

Beyond their formal function, caucuses served MPs' emotional and psychological needs. Former MPs described how their caucus community provided welcome, community, and even joy, especially in the beginning of their terms as MP. The bonding social capital that the caucuses produced helped members to embrace the exhausting full days, and face the external hostility that comes with being an elected official. In this way, the comradery of a party makes public service possible.

A Conservative MP described the feeling upon first joining caucus after an election, and how it influenced how they experienced even the most mundane of parliamentary procedures:

The bonding social capital that the caucuses produced helped members to embrace the exhausting full days, and face the external hostility that comes with being an elected official.



It was euphoric. It really was. People were very, very excited. We had a huge 2011 class of new Members of Parliament and people had a real sense of purpose and unity; excited to get going ... I think it was the first budget where there were thousands of amendments put forward by the opposition. We had to sit for something crazy, like 36 hours straight. It was actually a great kind of team-bonding experience for us. Now, when you got your break, because we would rotate, whatever, 15 people out at a time to go and have a break in the government lobby. Yeah, I look back on that as really one of the fonder memories for me.

Another MP, a New Democrat, evoked the way that caucus solidarity provided a deeply personal validation:

[An] image that is very, very strong [in my memory] is when we arrive at the big room, which was our caucus room. The NDP was the Official Opposition, which was amazing, amazing. So they lined us up in little chairs, and you were sitting down for the official photo, and we were all a little bit lost—like kids' first day at school.... And [Jack] came in and raised his cane, and he talked to us just from the heart, saying how proud he was of every one of us, and how happy he was that we had this great breakthrough.

My life has been a lot of different things and a lot of searching of what I wanted to do ... Where would I be able to fulfil my full potential? Where can I be the best I can be? And on the election night all my roads converged into that moment—and I knew [then] that it was what I wanted to do, and where I wanted to be.

MPs socialized with their caucus colleagues to different degrees—some described perceiving themselves as social outsiders. But the parliamentary atmosphere was extremely close, ultra-social, almost summer camp-like. As one MP described:

You go to a breakfast at 7:30 together. You go to a committee meeting at 8:45. You listen to each other give speeches. You encourage the other person. You talk about issues then you sit through Question Period together. You go for drinks. You go to receptions. You go to dinners. And you have no other responsibilities. So, it becomes sort of like high school or something ... And you make lifelong friendships. I didn't know that would happen.

"It becomes sort of like high school or something ... And you make lifelong friendships. I didn't know that would happen."

## MENTORSHIP: "THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT EVERYBODY WANTS YOUR JOB"

MPs' recollections vary about the extent to which their caucus-mates helped them into their role. New Democrats, for example, operated a formal mentorship program initially set up by Jack Layton, which several members identified as helpful. MPs also found informal mentors; one MP was mentored by a more senior member who sat on the same committee:

He just wanted me to shine, and was like "No, you're going to do this." And in committee he would give me leadership roles because he wanted me to shine, find my own niche, and just excel. [He said]: "Make this your baby and run with it." So it was a really great relationship ... and that one was organic.

Other MPs gave different accounts. One suggested: "There's not a lot of mentoring ... because you are fighting for survival every day. You are trying to get in the House to give your speech, then ... get to committee, then fly out as soon as humanly possible.... There's not a lot of time for thoughtful discussion."

Indeed, several MPs suggested that rather than finding support among caucus-mates, they experienced competition and even hostility. This is a complicated dynamic in the caucus. Caucus-mates are teammates. But given that the party leadership controls as the opportunities for advancement in a parliamentary career, caucus-mates are also the competition.

According to one MP who was in the Government caucus after the 2011 election: "People silo-ed. Like, they'd be given a role and they'd go into protectionism.... It's territorial. You don't keep your ministerial role or parliamentary secretarial role for long and the general assumption is that everybody wants your job." Another MP bitterly recounted their belief that an old friend had begun keeping secrets from them to get ahead in the competition for a cabinet appointment. And an opposition MP suggested the same dynamics were present outside of Government: "I've been appalled at the way people were treated, even among your own party. I will say, the biggest politics is inside your own caucus."

Several MPs suggested that rather than finding support among caucus-mates, they experienced competition and even hostility.

"I will say, the biggest politics is inside your own caucus."

## CAUCUS MEETINGS: DELIBERATION OR BRIEFING?

The most important function of the regular caucus meetings is to facilitate internal debate and deliberation, and to act as a kind of check on the leaders and their staff. Does this happen?

It is hard to clearly tell, in part because those meetings are carefully protected from public view, but also because MPs tell conflicting stories. In general, though, it appears that MPs are permitted to express considerably more independence behind closed doors in caucus meetings than they are in public settings like the House of Commons chamber or committee rooms.

But former MPs differ on whether caucus debates are meaningful deliberations, which may actually determine the party's position on an issue—or whether they are just exercises in caucus management.

A few MPs insisted that caucus meetings offered real influence on party decisions. According to one: “The leadership in the room would come with one direction, and there would be a bunch of people get up and say ‘wait a minute, that isn’t really what we should be doing right now,’ and the direction would change....” But this MP also acknowledged that while such a thing was possible, it was not the usual order of things: “I would often hear from my counterparts in the other parties that that kind of thing didn’t happen.... So we were much freer to shape the direction. But we didn’t have to do it very often.”

Some suggested that even if caucus members were not able to reverse the direction set by the leadership, the discussions that took place were meaningful. A former Cabinet Minister suggested:

Speaking up in caucus—if you make a well-informed, passionate, or even solemn point in caucus that generates applause, that will be taken into account. The PM or the minister is either going to explain why we can’t go in that direction and bring new arguments to the table, or the Government’s going to manoeuvre on the basis of that new reality that you have brought forward. So it can be very powerful.

Another MP was satisfied with what they perceived as the party leadership’s genuine interest in the views of MPs, even if the position was not going to change:

MPs differ on whether caucus debates are meaningful deliberations or whether they are just exercises in caucus management.

In caucus, they'd say, "This is the way we should be voting as Conservatives. Anybody that doesn't believe that, let's hear. We want to hear what you have to say." And we'd all have an opportunity always to voice. And then, the whip would step in and say, "If you feel you're going to stray from the party line, come and see me."

The anecdotes shared by MPs often suggested a kind of good-natured tolerance of independence behind closed doors, which is rarely seen in public. One former Conservative MP recalled a caucus meeting after they had sponsored a bill that was controversial and unpopular in the party:

I said, "First of all, I want to thank all my colleagues for their support and encouragement on my Private Member's Bill...." I could see them all sort whispering, "Who did that? Some supported it?" And I said, "Prime Minister, the next bills I'm going to be introducing are on abortion and capital punishment." He got the joke. His response was: "You go for that. But I suggest you put the capital punishment bill first."

But this more positive view of caucus deliberation was by no means universal. There was ample skepticism expressed by other MPs about what took place in caucus meetings. One former MP was blunt: "You have 60 seconds to talk. Nobody's listening." From another: "They make the decisions they want to make. You become a number." According to another:

I'd describe the caucus meetings not so much as meeting as briefings. There are no votes, or very few votes. Occasionally, the PM would by show of hands take the temperature of the room. But that would be it. If a minister had proposed legislative change, they would stand up. They would tell you what it was. You could ask questions. And then they went to the next agenda item. No vote. No substantive vetting.

That impression of the caucus meeting as a briefing recurred in MPs' anecdotes. For example, a member of the Government caucus remembered learning about an important and highly political policy decision: "They said we might have a special meeting.... Well, we didn't know what it was, we get there at 4:30, and the news release has already gone out at 4. 'Still wanna let you know that this is why we've done this, you're the messenger, have a nice day.'"

"You have 60 seconds to talk. Nobody's listening."

That impression of the caucus meeting as a briefing recurred in MPs' anecdotes.

Some took it further, suggesting that far from creating opportunities to hash out differences within the party, the leadership used caucus meetings to fire up the troops, paper over divisions within the party, and reinforce differences with other parties. “You should go in [to the House of Commons] with a noise monitor, after caucus meetings on Wednesday,” suggested one MP. “See how loud the heckling gets compared to other days. Because you’re all pumped up!”

### **“IF YOU DON’T WANT TO ABIDE BY [OUR] VALUES, GET THE HELL OUT!”**

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On balance, caucus meetings provided at least some opportunity for internal debate and for individual MPs to exercise independence—certainly more than in other, more public venues. At the same time, the party caucuses themselves, as social organisms, could act powerfully against independence of their members. These social dynamics are often overlooked in understanding why parties are so disciplined and why the Canadian Parliament is so scripted. It’s not just about punishments and rewards doled out by the all-powerful leader.

Several interviewees expressed a strongly held norm that if you got a chance to make your case behind closed doors in a caucus meeting, that is where the matter should end. One MP captured this view simply: if you’ve argued against the party position but failed to change it, “You go out a not-sore loser. You accept that you’ve lost.”

There was also a feeling among some MPs that the party itself defined the mission, which other members should have known going in, and that their continued insistence on public displays of independence could be chalked up to a kind of egotism.

One MP had no sympathy for dissenting caucus-mates: “You should abide by Conservative values. If you don’t want to abide by Conservative values, get the hell out.... I believe in the party line. And that’s what voting’s all about and why there’s different parties.”

Another offered this explanation for why some MPs feel stifled by the party:

Some [suggested] the leadership used caucus meetings to fire up the troops, paper over divisions within the party, and reinforce differences with other parties.

“If you’ve argued against the party position but failed to change it, “You go out a not-sore loser. You accept that you’ve lost.”

Sometimes people find themselves in the wrong party. That's the bigger problem.... People talk about toeing the party line. Well, you're in a party because you believe in the party. So, there's no party line that's forced on you. This is not the Communist Party where somebody decides one day that black is white and the next day that black is actually green and you have to follow that line.... Our political parties are broadly based ideas that if you're in that party, then you know what to expect and you're part of it.

A common theme expressed by former NDP MPs was that dissent did not, in fact, really exist in their caucus. For example: "I saw that struggle with [other parties]. We didn't have similar kinds of things within our party, because we didn't have those kinds of cracks." Another suggested "You get lucky if you're in the right party, so that almost all the time the stances the leader takes ... you can live with and/or completely agree with." But at least one former NDP member saw this as an unhealthy feature of the party: "It's got its roots in unions and solidarity at all costs, and you're either a team player or you're not. And if you're not 100 per cent a team player, you're evil."

## **"THE INDIVIDUAL LOSES POWER AS THE ELECTION COMES CLOSER"**

There is no single view of caucus dynamics in part because the extent of debate in caucus meetings, and the degree of individual freedom enjoyed by MPs in each party, appear to wax and wane, and are influenced by external circumstances. This was explicitly described by several former NDP MPs, for example, who had witnessed major changes in their party's electoral standing. According to one senior parliamentarian:

We love to tear an issue apart and examine it and take different positions. So [in previous Parliaments] we always did that in our caucus. I would say, over the years though, that the role of the party and its direction has changed.... In the early days, there was a lot more space to do that. And frankly, as a fourth party, nobody worried too much. I feel like I did a lot of stuff just because I just went out and did it.... As we go closer to the possibility that we could become the Official Opposition and even Government, that whole notion of not having people freelancing and having more discipline became more important.

**"If you're not 100 per cent a team player, you're evil."**

**"As we go closer to the possibility that we could become the Official Opposition and even Government, that whole notion of not having people free-lancing and having more discipline became more important."**

Another described how the burden of managing a party caucus changes as an election approaches, and MPs—perceiving that there is more at stake, and that it is critical to present a unified front—become more willing to fall into line. In other words, leaders did not have to work hard to enforce discipline: “It became easier because the chance of winning is so great that the individual loses power. [Because] then we have to be a team: ‘Don’t fuck this up.’ So the individual loses power as the election comes closer.” With the introduction of fixed election dates, which provide more certainty about when elections will happen, it is possible that this pre-writ discipline may now set in earlier, and last longer.

### **“YOU CANNOT EXPLAIN IT TO SOMEBODY ON THE OUTSIDE”**

A significant minority of interviewees saw following the leader and supporting the group not just as a path to career advancement, or a benefit at election time, but as a fundamental value to uphold. One MP even resented being asked by colleagues to pressure the leader on an issue: “I’m standing beside my leader. I’m a team player ... I really think teamwork is really important.”

Another suggested that it was fine to think independently, but “You have to toe the line—and when you work in a corporation obviously that’s what you have to do. You have to spout the corporate philosophy—the same in a party.”

Because of these strongly held norms about the importance of teamwork and championing the party’s values, caucus members can powerfully police each other, and discipline each other without prompting from the leadership.

Some MPs’ stories demonstrated this in startling ways. For example, when one MP voted on a private member’s bill on transgender rights differently from many members of his caucus: “Because we’re a diverse party, there are those strong evangelicals. Some of them never talked to me again. Never.”

Another MP said his relationships began to change after he had made some public shows of independence:

There were a few people who were kind of friends with me and we might go for a beer and wings on a Tuesday night, who were suddenly very distant. And I don’t believe that was by edict. I don’t believe anybody said, “[He’s] poison. You better stay away from him.” As with all things about caucus solidarity, I think it’s mostly self-policing.

“You have to spout the corporate philosophy—the same in a party.”

“As with all things about caucus solidarity, I think it’s mostly self-policing.”

A different MP described the astonishing, dogmatic commitment to unity that seemed to pervade their fellow caucus members:

I think my voting record is 98.6 per cent with [my party]. I don't know about you, but I can't get 98.6 in school on anything. [And yet] I was considered a maverick. We have to give our heads a shake. And when you stand up against your party's wishes, it's not an easy thing to do because you have people looking at you. You have "Oh, there he goes again," those kinds of things. Sure, I'm an adult. Should it bother me? Maybe not. But of course it does. These people are your colleagues.

That last point was taken up by another MP, reflecting back on their experience and trying to articulate the powerful effects of the caucus dynamic.

There is peer pressure that I can't—you cannot explain it to somebody on the outside. About how grown men and grown women, educated, experienced in professions or business can fall into this sort of system where there's such a need to conform. You can't explain it to the people on the outside, but people on the inside understand it intuitively....

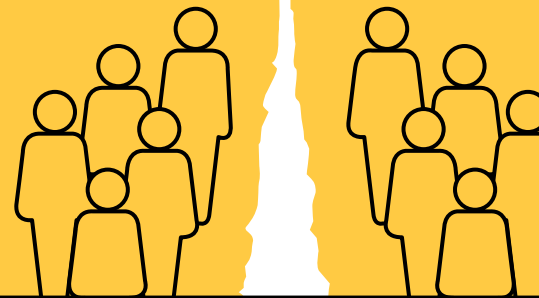
I've seen frequently, at a pre-election forum or even during a nomination, the question will come up: "If there's an issue before the House that your constituents feel one way about it, but your party feels the other way about it, which way will you go?" And nine times out of ten, the person says, "Well, of course I'd vote the way my constituents want me to vote." And I think they really mean it. I don't think they're lying. I think they're really being candid and truthful. But you get there and the pressures, both levers of carrot and stick and your friends and pals wanting you to conform ... The pressure is indescribable. And sometimes overwhelming.

"I think my voting record is 98.6 per cent with [my party], [and yet] I was considered a maverick."

"There is peer pressure that I can't—you cannot explain it to somebody on the outside."



## Leaders: “Humanity personified”



Of course, the leader and the staff in his or her office are the other inescapable party presence in MPs' lives. For a broader discussion of how leaders use parliamentary process and their control over advancement to keep MPs on script and enforce intense party discipline, see [Flip the Script](#), the first report in this series.

But the interviews also sought to get under the surface of the MP-leader dynamic, and better understand the nature of that relationship. They revealed that in the same way that caucus members self-police to preserve their own discipline, there are values-based motivations behind MPs' decisions to follow the leader. These motivations live alongside the incentives that are in place.

In fact, despite complaining in other contexts about their lack of independence, MPs were overwhelmingly deferential to—almost in awe of—their leaders. At the same time, those leaders were described as fairly remote from everyday existence for MPs. Rarely did interviewed MPs describe themselves as being responsible for overseeing, containing, or correcting their leader—even though this is a democratic role that is expected of them in our system. Citizens have no leverage over leaders, and party members have little—but MPs, who are directly elected by the people, theoretically do.

Despite complaining in other contexts about their lack of independence, MPs were overwhelmingly deferential to—almost in awe of—their leaders.

### HOW MPs DESCRIBE THEIR FORMER LEADERS

- “A very strong leader in that he commanded excellence.”
- “Demonstrated the empathy and humanity that you would hope and wish for.”
- “Had the overwhelming respect of his caucus, and he deserved it.”
- “[When] I listened to him, there’s a couple of times he just dropped my jaw.”
- “He’d cover all angles.”
- “A kind and elegant human being.”
- “There isn’t one thing that I’m aware of that he did that did not have the greater good involved.”
- “Humanity personified.”

But MPs described their former leaders with deep deference. And in the same way that MPs defended caucus solidarity as a value onto itself, some MPs argued that that deference simply represented the right way to behave. Several MPs insisted that this did not preclude any kind of disagreement, but that they owed it to the leader to dissent in the correct manner.

According to one: "I was a team player. I didn't undermine my leader or my caucus, but I spoke up on issues quietly and in the right place." Another MP, recalling a particularly independent member from their caucus, suggested that "he could have achieved more by disagreeing more deftly," behind closed doors. He continued, remembering a difference he had with the party direction:

It was important to respect my leader, who was and is a great man, who achieved tremendous things.... Was the best leader in the Western world, probably the whole world in his time. I wasn't going to forget all that when I disagree with him on an important issue. Edmund Burke would say, "Respect your leaders. Give them dignity." That is essential to government and democracy, to civilization and to peace, order, and good government.

## A REMOTE PRESENCE

While beloved, leaders were generally seen at a distance. One MP recalled of their leader: "I didn't talk to him much in four and a half years. If I were [him], I would have talked to my MPs more often. But hey, you're busy."

The fond memories that MPs do have of personally meeting their leaders reflect this remoteness. Several MPs recalled how touched they were to receive birthday greetings from their leader (while another suggested that the absence of a birthday card was the source of some dissatisfaction). MPs told odd stories about passing encounters—getting the chance to walk up Parliament Hill with the leader, or sitting near him in the dining room—which imply that such interactions were out of the ordinary.

This remoteness matters, and not because MPs occasionally feel snubbed. The caucus, consisting entirely of directly elected representatives of the people in most cases, is supposed to be an ongoing challenge to and check on the power of the leader, as well as a conduit of public opinion. When it fails to play

"I didn't undermine my leader or my caucus, but I spoke up on issues quietly and in the right place."

MPs told odd stories about passing encounters which imply that such interactions were out of the ordinary.

## THE REFORM ACT

In 2013, Conservative backbench MP Michael Chong introduced the Reform Act, a bill which imposed limits on the power of party leaders and strengthened party caucuses in several ways:

- Leaders would no longer be required to approve candidates nominated by local party associations.
- Caucus members could force a leadership review if 15 per cent of members supported it.
- If a leadership review was called, caucus members could vote by secret ballot to replace their leader.
- Caucus members would also vote to choose the caucus chair, and determine whether a member should be expelled from or readmitted to their caucus.

The Reform Act intended to address power relations within parties by setting out these new rules in law. But after encountering some resistance, the bill was reintroduced with softer terms. For example, the threshold for forcing a leadership review was raised, so that support of 20 per cent of caucus members was required. The bill was amended more significantly in committee, again to soften its effects. Importantly, rather than having uniformly applied new rules, caucus members would vote at the beginning of each Parliament on which (if any) of the new rules limiting the power of leaders would be applied to their party. Each member's vote would be known to each other and the party leadership.

The Reform Act was passed in 2015. But few of its rules were adopted by the major parties after the 2015 election. The Conservative caucus complied with the law and voted four times as required. They voted in favour of the rule giving caucus control over the expulsion and readmission of caucus members and the rule concerning the election of a caucus chair. They voted for a modified version of the rule concerning the election of an interim leader, but voted down the rule regarding the review and removal of a party leader. It remains unclear whether the Liberals and New Democrats accepted any provisions of the law, and indeed, if they held votes at the time and in the way that is required by the law.

that role or is unable to, the result is party leaders who have little in the way of a direct mandate from the people wielding enormous power in Ottawa.

But it's also worth noting a strongly dissenting view, expressed by a former senior Cabinet Minister who felt that the narrative of an isolated and dominating leader is overblown in the public conversation:

If you need to go and disagree with the Prime Minister, you can talk to him.... If you see a collision with the Prime Minister—say, the Prime Minister's Director of Policy doesn't like something or your legal advisor or whatever. I see the Prime Minister every day. Not just as a Cabinet Minister—as an MP.

The intimacy of our system is extraordinary. Because you're in Question Period. You're in Question Period preparation. You're in caucus. You're in cabinet committee. You're in some other event that brings you together. And I'm sure it's the same for the current Prime Minister, being taken aside and pushed and prodded on things.... I found the Prime Minister to be very collaborative, but also more decentralized than people realize.

## COURTESANS

MPs themselves offered an explanation for why they tell very different stories about how close they felt to their leader. It was suggested on several occasions that individual influence and access depended on whether an MP was within the leader's inner circle. Your ability to reach the leader depended on "if you were part of the in-group," suggested one New Democrat, which could depend on a number of factors: "It was often if you had studied at McGill and were bilingual, you had more influence." According to another MP:

The party makes the final decision, after having consulted—or we hope having had time to consult. And so, from there, it's a bit like the king's court. We can make parallels with the monarchy. If, as a courtesan, you don't position yourself well, well you don't stand out—or in any case, you can be easily [ignored].

## STAFFERS: "I SAW THEM AS SUPPORT. THEY SAW ME AS A PUPPET"

While MPs frequently described their frustration with the limits imposed on their independence, few were prepared to blame their leaders. Leaders' staff, on the other hand, were fair game.

Staffers, the so-called "kids in short pants," provoked most of MPs' scorn. Several longer-standing members observed that staffers had grown in stature and authority over time. According to one:

"I found the Prime Minister to be very collaborative, but also more decentralized than people realize."

"If, as a courtesan, you don't position yourself well, well you don't stand out—or in any case, you can be easily [ignored]."

Staffers, the so-called "kids in short pants," provoked most of MPs' scorn.

The big tension that I see now in Parliament is ... and not just in Parliament, but in government, I guess, more broadly, is between elected and unelected people. And the extent to which unelected people are basically given authority by the Prime Minister to say, "Go and tell so and so to do such and such." ... I think now, it's much more controlled by unelected people. As the power in the executive grows, the power in the Prime Minister's Office grows, the premier's office, the leader's office, all those offices ... it's the people who are not the Prime Minister or are not the Cabinet member or not the MP who are often making key decisions. Doesn't mean they shouldn't be respected for the work that they do. You couldn't run the system without them. But, I do think that people sometimes don't take caucus seriously enough.

Another senior parliamentarian agreed, commenting specifically on developments in the last Parliament:

I think there's a culture of governance whereby the advisors are assuming more power than they should. And not only with respect to the Prime Minister. But with respect to the other ministers.... This is a phenomenon that I saw in Harper's Government whereby his advisor would determine the staff of the other ministers. And that way, you had a real centralized government.

Some MPs had clearly chafed under directives from the kids in short pants, and clashed frequently. One MP remembered a blow-up after a caucus meeting:

[I] left a caucus meeting early, was followed out by a senior staffer saying, "That's very disrespectful to not stay in caucus, da da da da da." And I just said, "Sorry. I may have this wrong. I think you work for me. I don't work for you. I have something important to do. Mind your own business." Well, that story got around fast, so there was a war from the beginning. I saw staff as support for me. And they saw me as a puppet to do what the party wanted.

Another senior MP, who claimed to have simply told party staffers to "piss off and leave me alone," expressed disgust with new MPs for their willingness to go along with staffer dictates:

"I think there's a culture of governance whereby the advisors are assuming more power than they should."

The problem is the kids in short pants. They're the controllers of the party. Our new MPs here in the House of Commons, I spoke to a couple of them. They're already entrenched. They've been molded already. They drank the Kool-Aid. Because they were told to drink the Kool-Aid and they sucked right into it. They thought, "OK, in order to get re-elected, I have to do this." Bullshit.

Some MPs were more measured in their evaluation. One suggested that "When you say [kids in short pants], you tend to think of the worst ways you were treated. By and large, I was treated very respectfully." In this MP's view, the party's senior advisors and policy people generally made a positive contribution, but communications staff wielded a heavier hand, and the direction they gave was often dubious: "Don't tell me what the spin is. Tell me what the facts are and I will decide how to nuance that message. If you put someone on television and they just say the same point over and over again ... I think that's completely ineffective."

But even on this, some MPs dissented from the majority view. In fact, there were a small number of vigorous defences of party staffers. One MP declared:

I loved the boys in short pants, because you know what? The advice they were giving was generally pretty damn good ... and [they] knew the Conservative value system. Damn rights I went to [them] for advice. I didn't want to screw up.

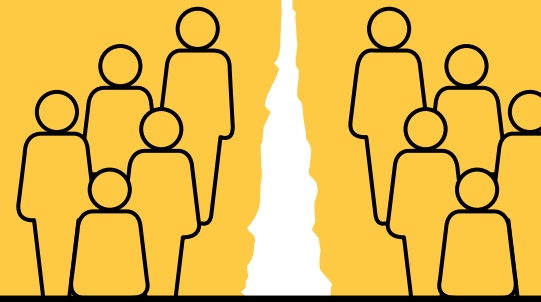
In general, though, staff tended to absorb a lot of the blame for MPs' feelings of been dominated and man-handled by the central party. One experienced parliamentarian summed up this feeling eloquently:

It's frustrating for parliamentarians [because] I don't think that their views and their experience are sufficiently appreciated by people who've never been elected to anything. I've always felt ... that you have to give a lot of time and respect to the people who have put their name on the ballot, who've gone out, who've campaigned, who've put their careers on the line. They've given up something else to run. You're suddenly going out on the stage. And there's all kinds of other people who are the stage managers and the other people and they've got jobs and they've got work and they're doing their thing. [But] they don't know what it's like to be out there on the stage. They don't necessarily appreciate how challenging it is and how difficult it can be. And also potentially what advice and experience you bring to the conversation.

"Don't tell me what the spin is. Tell me what the facts are and I will decide how to nuance that message."

"It's frustrating for parliamentarians [because] I don't think that their views and their experience are sufficiently appreciated by people who've never been elected to anything."

# Conclusion: Healthier political parties, starting in caucus



Parties are essential to a healthy representative democracy, and yet in practice are also the source of many of its ailments. So what do we want parties to be, and how do we want MPs to make this so?

## **STRONG PARTISANSHIP, WEAK PARTIES**

At the same time that our politics has become more partisan, political parties are stuck in a long-term decline in how they are perceived by the public.

- In 1979, 30 per cent of Canadians said they had a lot or a great deal of respect and confidence in political parties.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2017, just 10 per cent of Canadians said they had a lot of trust in parties (compared with 22 per cent who trust their municipal government, and 26 per cent who trust the prime minister).<sup>10</sup>
- Seventy per cent of Canadian have a negative impression of parties in general, and 94 per cent of Canadians have little or no idea what parties do outside of elections.<sup>11</sup>
- Only approximately four per cent of Canadians report involvement with a political party or group.<sup>12</sup>

MPs provide only part of the picture. They are not and should not be the only important actors inside a political party. Everyone involved in political parties—from grassroots members, to staff, elected representatives, and leaders—need to think seriously about how to find new life as organizations for mass engagement and deliberation, to halt their 50-year decline in the eyes of citizens. Parties are too important. This requires a root and branch examination of the internal health of political parties, from the perspectives of members, office holders, and the general public.

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## THE SAMARA CENTRE'S PARTY DEMOCRACY PROJECT

Political parties are private institutions that perform public democratic functions. We can't restore Canadian democracy to health without internally healthy political parties. But relative to other aspects of Canada's democracy, parties operate in secret, with little scrutiny or oversight.

That's why the Samara Centre is launching a multi-year examination of the democratic behaviour of parties. Interviews with MPs point to problems inside parties, but provide only a partial and limited picture. The Samara Centre's party project will examine the party at every level, from the riding and mass membership on up. Our goal is to develop a systematic, evidence-based picture of the democratic health of parties, and use this original research to generate incentives for parties to become better democratic actors.

This work will be ongoing through 2019. It will ultimately set out concrete calls to action and policy recommendations for more participatory, responsive, representative, and accountable political parties.

For MPs, the question of what they can do to revitalize parties is somewhat simpler. The parliamentary party will always maintain discipline and solidarity, present a cohesive vision and narrative, and provide structure to the House of Commons. But the parliamentary party should also be a forum for debate and deliberation, and a true check on the vast power of party leaders, especially prime ministers. The deliberation that goes on within a party is not just good for the party; it is also a public good. It requires leaders to, at minimum, provide a serious rationale for their decisions.

Bringing some of the internal functions of parties into the light does not mean the end of disciplined parties. One MP pointed out that Canadian parties are unusually allergic to any public displays of dissent:

It happens so often in the UK.... I've watched Question Period in the UK where a backbench MP aggressively questions a Minister [from their party] because of something that's going on in your riding. If you had the audacity to do that in a Canadian Parliament, under any political organization, Conservative, Liberal or NDP, that is a one-way ticket to the whip's office and worse ... I don't understand why we can't get there.

I know what all of my former colleagues will say and everyone else will say: "Well, you can do that quietly behind closed doors." So, what? What's the problem of doing it openly and publicly?

The parliamentary party should also be a forum for debate and deliberation, and a true check on the vast power of party leaders.



In Canadian halls of power, there appears to be a deeply held view that anything other than absolute message control would make a party unelectable. But some MPs questioned this dogma, suggesting that open dialogue is a way to show the public how healthy and vital a party is. As one put it, “I just think Canadians are smart enough and mature enough to understand that political parties are made up of all kinds of different groups of people who think a whole bunch of different things and that there is nothing wrong with that.”

And while partisan conflict is also essential to our democracy, there is a danger of reaching a degree of partisanship that is anti-democratic. Pointless, unthinking partisanship closes off the possibility for meaningful debates and collective decision-making. That problem can begin in Parliament, but may not end there. Research finds that when politicians become more polarized and hostile to one another, they model behaviour that citizens might adopt.<sup>13</sup> Partisan divisions can structure the debate on major issues, but all issues do not need to be hyper-partisan. As one former MP argued: “People need to define parties by some core essential things—whether that’s free trade, level of taxation, and that. And then, allow more policy items to be outside.”

In previous reports, the Samara Centre has described rule changes that would give committees [more independence and members more freedom in debates](#). But the party problem is also clearly cultural, baked into our modern political system. This requires more consideration, including paying attention to some mundane and easily overlooked aspects of parliamentary life. Below are some easy interim steps—interventions and strategies—focused on Parliament itself. But the problem is bigger than anything described below, and the Samara Centre’s upcoming party democracy project will outline a reform agenda from the grassroots to the leadership.

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## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS-PARTISANSHIP

Parties in the Canadian Parliament have an overabundance of “bonding social capital”—the MPs within each caucus are socially close, uniform, and protective. But MPs need to find a way to generate more “bridging social capital”—building those social links to members in other parties that will allow dialogue and cooperation.

There are formal opportunities for cross-partisan cooperation, like committees. Committees are made up of members from different parties, who are meant to work together to examine legislation and Government policy. But as detailed in *Flip the Script*, committees in the last Parliament became heavily infected with partisanship, and serious cooperation was rare.

MPs are quick to identify the social dimension of this question. They explain that partisanship can prevail in any forum, unless Members find a way to change the culture and social psychology of the House. That’s not easy. There isn’t a procedural fix. It requires creativity, and attention to detail. Some small, simple ideas to start with include:



**Make space:** MPs need opportunities to meet and mingle outside of the formal work of Parliament. In a bygone era, Members would go straight from voting to the bar (or bars plural—at one point there were three in Centre Block itself). No one wants that era back. The lifestyle excluded anyone with any family responsibilities, for example. But informal social space still matters. Lord Norton of Louth, one of the world’s foremost scholars of Parliament and a Peer in the UK House of Lords, has written about the importance of informal space in Parliament. He suggests that the opening of a new office building for British MPs and Peers with open social space “facilitating interaction between members of both houses... has transformed the dynamics of Parliament.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, along with creating opportunities for MPs from different parties to mix, there would be value in facilitating the social mixing of MPs and senators, given that the largest number of senators now sit as independents, and operate without party direction.

At Canada’s Parliament, it is a challenge to even book a room without permission from a party whip. Perhaps, with Centre Block undergoing massive renovations over the next decade, parliamentarians should consider setting aside new social space outside of the control of parties, which would allow Members from different parties to meet each other as colleagues and friends. This is one subtle, easy step to plant the seeds for a healthier House of Commons.



**Hit the road:** On several occasions, MPs spoke of the bonding experiences of travelling with members from other parties. One MP recalled how stunned a waitress in Saskatoon was to realize that members from four parties were sitting together and getting along. While this type of public expenditure always has the potential to be criticized, committees should not hesitate to get out of Ottawa. There are other benefits to this too, of course—it is valuable to take important discussions to citizens throughout the country, and to make Parliament more central to our national political life. But it is also a rare opportunity for Members from different parties to get out from under the watchful gaze of leaders and their staff, and to discover that their fellow committee members are in fact fellow human beings.



**Support all-party caucuses and parliamentary friendship groups:** In recent years the Canadian Parliament has seen rapid expansion in all-party caucuses (APCs)<sup>15</sup>, informal groups of MPs and senators from different parties with a focus on a particular policy issue or demographic community. There has also been a surge in parliamentary friendship groups, which bring together MPs and senators who want to promote better relationships between Canada and particular countries or regions of the world. APCs and friendship groups vary in their level of activity and the commitment of their members, but they can improve policy debates and representation by helping MPs exchange information and engage with stakeholders. Moreover, they offer another mostly independent opportunity for members from different parties to discover basic shared values and interests.

There are currently 16 interparliamentary groups that receive parliamentary funding. The Board of Internal Economy should contemplate expanding this support to cover some operating costs or other resources, such as translation or communications support, to other APCs and interparliamentary groups that can demonstrate cross-partisan commitment and real activity. In other words, the goal would not necessarily be to support the proliferation of more groups, but to strengthen those groups that offer meaningful opportunities for cross-partisan discussion. Parliamentary financial support—with disclosure requirements—would also result in more transparency for APCs, and could reduce or eliminate the need for the external funding from lobbyists on which many groups currently rely.

## STRENGTHENING THE CAUCUS OVER THE LEADER

The members of each caucus should, in theory, have significant leverage over their leader. This is democratically important because it results in decentralized power, greater accountability, and more collective decision-making.

In practice, however, the party caucus is weak in Canada. And a recent experiment in correcting this power balance reveals how much of the problem lies in culture, rather than formal structure. Michael Chong's Reform Act (2015) changed the Parliament of Canada Act to provide caucus members with incrementally more authority to manage their own affairs, but only for parties who opt in. While the bill passed with overwhelming support in the House of Commons, no major party adopted all of its provisions (and it remains unclear if several parties adopted any).

There is obviously more work to be done. For example:



**Get organized:** When we asked a senior former member what the best way to stand up to the leader was, he offered this: "The best way is with allies. Honestly ... we used the expression 'whack-a-mole.' The center can whack a few, but they can't keep 20 down." In other Westminster Parliaments, backbenchers are more organized and coordinated, and as a result, are a more serious check on the power of the leadership.

In the UK, for example, the 1922 Committee (formally, the Conservative Private Members' Committee) is a caucus of backbench Tory MPs that has existed for 95 years. The Committee meets independently—leaders and cabinet members are not allowed to attend—and at times has put serious pressure on the party's leadership over issues. Opinion is mixed on whether this influence has always been positive. But in the Canadian context, where the power balance is so profoundly tipped in the direction of the leader, it is worthwhile for backbench MPs of all parties to consider similar mechanisms. Coordinating in this way reduces the cost of dissent for an individual MP, and could help to renew the long-lost sense that caucus members are independent from the leadership.



**Gain leverage:** MPs have no formal role in selecting the leader. The leader is instead chosen by the mass membership of the party—or, in the case of the Liberal Party, by “supporters” who do not have to be members. This power of leadership selection was given to members with democratic goals in mind. But the result is a leader who does not require the support of the caucus members, and who holds all the cards in Parliament.

This is a controversial area for change. Any move back toward a system where caucus selected leaders would be criticized as anti-democratic and elitist. But the status quo also carries a severe democratic cost: it significantly contributes to the centralization of power in the hands of party leaders. The Reform Act opened up a conversation about whether MPs could play some role in leadership selection, by formally giving them the authority to remove leaders in a leadership review. The conversation should not end there. In seeking democratic renewal within the party, party members should carefully consider what kind of role caucus members could be given in leader selection or removal, and how to balance it with the desire for broad public participation. This is a difficult and politically challenging conversation. But it may be critical to ensuring a healthy internal party democracy between leadership elections.

In the first report of this series, [Flip the Script](#), the Samara Centre set out an agenda to reform the rules governing Parliament, which would reduce the power of leaders and strengthen the position of individual MPs. In the second report, [Beyond the Barbecue](#), we proposed a dramatic re-imagining of constituency work, which would allow MPs to make better use of time in their local communities, away from the supervision of party bosses.

In this third report, MPs remind us that there are no easy fixes for the problems in our institutions and political leadership. The excessive partisanship of our age is first and foremost a cultural phenomenon, a state of mind which produces particular party behaviours—too much solidarity among caucus members, not enough within the broader Parliament—which can harm democracy. That behaviour also compels citizens to turn away from parties, weakening their connection to our representative institutions. That's why parties need to be central to the solution. As the MP quoted in the introduction put it, we need less partisanship, stronger parties.

Ultimately, there is no mechanical solution. Power is taken, not given, and partisanship can only be solved by partisans. MPs can dedicate their time in public life to leaving our politics better than they found it—they have that power. But they have to choose to take that path, and embrace the risks that come with it.

Ultimately, there is no mechanical solution. Power is taken, not given, and partisanship can only be solved by partisans.

## METHODOLOGY

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In early 2017, Samara contacted former Members of Parliament who retired or lost their seats after the 41st Parliament (2011 to 2015). As with the first MP Exit Interviews project, we chose to speak to former, rather than current, MPs because we felt they would be less constrained by the demands of office and, having stepped away, would have had time to reflect on their years in public life.

We interviewed 54 former MPs, ensuring that they came from all the major national political parties and most regions of the country. The distribution of interviewed MPs broadly reflects the makeup of the outgoing cohort of MPs in 2015. The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAFP) was our partner in this project and provided the initial letter of introduction and invitation to the former MPs on our behalf.

Interviews were organized using a semi-structured interview methodology. We created a standard question guide, but allowed the interviews to unfold organically, providing space for former MPs to lead the conversation. All interviews were conducted in person, often in the home or office of the former parliamentarian, in their preferred official language. The interviews ranged in length but were commonly approximately two hours long. Each interviewee was asked to sign an informed consent form, which authorized quoting from the interview with attribution.

All but two interviews were recorded, and all the audio records have been transcribed. Transcripts were coded and analyzed using the qualitative research software program NVivo.

We are committed to ensuring the results of this work are made widely available in order to advance public understanding of the role of political leadership and Parliament in Canada. Samara has the consent of the interviewees to deposit the interview in the National Archives once the MP Exit Interviews project is complete, and will do so. This project is among the most ambitious, large-scale and ongoing inquiries into the experiences of Members of Parliament in Canada, and we would like to ensure that its educational value is available to future generations.

## END NOTES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This second volume of the MP Exit Interviews project would not be possible without the support of many generous donors and foundations that support the Samara Centre for Democracy. We want to specifically thank the MacMillan Family Foundation, Bennett Jones, BMO Foundation, Rosamond Ivey, Bill Graham, Torrance and Andree Wylie and The John and Judy Bragg Family Foundation for their multi-year support of the project. We also want to thank many donors that have given generously and continuously to the Samara Centre for Democracy—without which momentum for a multi-year project like the MP Exit Interviews would not be possible. Among those many donors, special thanks to Vass Bednar, Grant and Claudia Buchanan, Peter Grant, Tony Griffiths, Beth Haddon, Ernie and Verna Hilderman, Margaret Huber, Gerard Kennedy, Stephen D. Lister, Patrice Merrin, Ruth Ostrower, Hon. Jim Peterson, Elaine Solway, Gary Solway, Nalini Stewart, Grace Westcott, Richard Woods, Janet Yale, Bill Young and Leen Al Zaibak.

We are indebted to the generous support of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAFP), and in particular to Executive Director Francis LeBlanc and the CAFP Board. The CAFP has supported the project since its inception, and without their involvement Samara would not be able to reach so many MPs after they leave public life.

Thank you also to the 54 former Members of Parliament who generously gave of their time to be interviewed, and shared their experiences and perspectives with us. A list of participating MPs is available in the Appendix. The willingness of these MPs to open their doors to us, and to take the time to share their stories in great depth, reflects their commitment to supporting the next generation of political leadership and building a positive public life in Canada.

We are also grateful to those who worked with us to organize and conduct the interviews. Christina Vietinghoff managed outreach, design and planning, and



conducted interviews. Miriam Fahmy interviewed MPs primarily in Quebec, and contributed valued analysis to the project. Jane Hilderman, Michael MacMillan and Michael Morden interviewed everyone else. Ruth Ostrower and Erica Chan coordinated the transportation and other logistics required to visit so many communities across Canada.

Laura Pin, Natalie Brunet, Terhas Ghebretecte and Louise Cockram analysed and coded the interview transcripts.

Paul EJ Thomas provided extremely helpful comments on earlier drafts of the report. Michael Chong verified details regarding the Reform Act's passage and implementation.

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## PARTICIPATING FORMER MPs

| Member of Parliament      | Riding                              | Province                  | Party Affiliation (recent) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Hon. Diane Ablonczy       | Calgary—Nose Hill                   | Alberta                   | Conservative               |
| Hon. Chris Alexander      | Ajax—Pickering                      | Ontario                   | Conservative               |
| Stella Ambler             | Mississauga South                   | Ontario                   | Conservative               |
| Paulina Ayala             | Honoré-Mercier                      | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Joyce Bateman             | Winnipeg South Centre               | Manitoba                  | Conservative               |
| Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe | Pierrefonds—Dollard                 | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Charmaine Borg            | Terrebonne—Blainville               | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Hon. Ron Cannan           | Kelowna—Lake Country                | British Columbia          | Conservative               |
| Corneliu Chisu            | Pickering—Scarborough East          | Ontario                   | Conservative               |
| Olivia Chow               | Trinity—Spadina                     | Ontario                   | NDP                        |
| Rob Clarke                | Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River | Saskatchewan              | Conservative               |
| Joe Comartin              | Windsor—Tecumseh                    | Ontario                   | NDP                        |
| Raymond Côté              | Beauport—Limoilou                   | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Hon. Irwin Cotler         | Mount Royal                         | Quebec                    | Liberal                    |
| Libby Davies              | Vancouver East                      | British Columbia          | NDP                        |
| Paul Dewar                | Ottawa Centre                       | Ontario                   | NDP                        |
| Hon. Steven Fletcher      | Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia    | Manitoba                  | Conservative               |
| Mylène Freeman            | Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel         | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Hon. Shelly Glover        | Saint Boniface                      | Manitoba                  | Conservative               |
| Peter Goldring            | Edmonton East                       | Alberta                   | Conservative               |
| Claude Gravelle           | Nickel Belt                         | Ontario                   | NDP                        |
| Dan Harris                | Scarborough Southwest               | Ontario                   | NDP                        |
| Jack Harris               | St. John's East                     | Newfoundland and Labrador | NDP                        |
| Bryan Hayes               | Sault Ste. Marie                    | Ontario                   | Conservative               |
| Ted Hsu                   | Kingston and the Islands            | Ontario                   | Liberal                    |
| Bruce Hyer                | Thunder Bay—Superior North          | Ontario                   | Green Party                |
| Jean-François Larose      | Repentigny                          | Quebec                    | Forces et Démocratie       |
| Alexandrine Latendresse   | Louis-Saint-Laurent                 | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Hélène LeBlanc            | LaSalle—Émard                       | Quebec                    | NDP                        |
| Megan Leslie              | Halifax                             | Nova Scotia               | NDP                        |

|                        |   |                  |              |
|------------------------|---|------------------|--------------|
| Chungsen Leung         | Willowdale  | Ontario          | Conservative |
| Laurin Liu             | Rivière-des-Mille-Îles                              | Quebec           | NDP          |
| Hon. Ted Menzies       | Macleod   | Alberta          | Conservative |
| Marie-Claude Morin     | Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot                               | Quebec           | NDP          |
| Rick Norlock           | Northumberland—<br>Quinte West                      | Ontario          | Conservative |
| Hon. Bev Oda           | Durham  | Ontario          | Conservative |
| Hon. Christian Paradis | Mégantic—L'Érable                                   | Quebec           | Conservative |
| Ève Péclet             | La Pointe-de-l'Île                                  | Quebec           | NDP          |
| Hon. Bob Rae           | Toronto Centre                                      | Ontario          | Liberal      |
| James Rajotte          | Edmonton—Leduc                                      | Alberta          | Conservative |
| Brent Rathgeber        | Edmonton—St. Albert                                 | Alberta          | Independent  |
| Craig Scott            | Toronto—Danforth                                    | Ontario          | NDP          |
| Kyle Seebach           | Brampton West                                       | Ontario          | Conservative |
| Djaouida Sellah        | Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert                            | Quebec           | NDP          |
| Jinny Jogindera Sims   | Newton—North Delta                                  | British Columbia | NDP          |
| Rathika Sitsabaiesan   | Scarborough—Rouge River                             | Ontario          | NDP          |
| Peter Stoffer          | Sackville—Eastern Shore                             | Nova Scotia      | NDP          |
| Mike Sullivan          | York South—Weston                                   | Ontario          | NDP          |
| Nycole Turmel          | Hull—Aylmer   | Quebec           | NDP          |
| John Weston            | West Vancouver—Sunshine<br>Coast—Sea to Sky Country | British Columbia | Conservative |
| David Wilks            | Kootenay—Columbia                                   | British Columbia | Conservative |
| Hon. Lynne Yelich      | Blackstrap  | Saskatchewan     | Conservative |
| Terence Young          | Oakville  | Ontario          | Conservative |
| Wai Young              | Vancouver South                                     | British Columbia | Conservative |

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