





## *Letter from the Editor*

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In a 1999 American newspaper article about the coming influence of the Internet on politics, George Washington University political scientist Michael Cornfield quipped, “I can’t think of anything except kissing babies that you can’t do online.” Fast forward 15 years – a lifetime in the digital age – and there is probably now an app for that.

The speed with which technology has changed and advanced since the end of the last century has only increased in recent years. Parliaments are confronting situations previously unimaginable – the use of handheld digital communication devices in assemblies, paperless petition campaigns, and the tremendous speed and reach of social media to communicate parliamentary proceedings.

In this issue we present articles on various aspects of digital issues affecting Canada’s parliaments and also report on how the Canadian public and its politicians are benefiting from technology or grappling with the challenges it presents.

From promising experiments with e-petitions in British Columbia and the evolution of online communication in the National Assembly to the inherent difficulties with Internet voting and the

consequences of tweets in terms of parliamentary privilege and procedure, these articles bring to light some positives and negatives for parliamentary democracy and its institutions in the digital age.

**Will Stos**  
**Editor**



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# Are E-petitions a Viable Tool for Increasing Citizen Participation in Our Parliamentary Institutions?

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Hon. Linda Reid, MLA

*Although some experts have suggested legislatures should be cautious about moving to internet voting until challenges with secrecy and security, voter verification, auditability and cost-effectiveness are addressed, the author suggests that electronic petitions may offer an incremental step toward broader engagement with voters online. This article reviews current e-petitions systems, the difference between qualitative and quantitative systems, technical challenges and the potential benefit of encouraging voter participation. The author concludes by listing the best practices to consider when developing an e-petitions system.*



**T**echnological and procedural innovations play a role in the health of our parliamentary institutions. In BC, as in many other jurisdictions, our Legislative Assembly has embraced new technologies — TV broadcast of debates in new digital formats, expanded

use of the Assembly website to provide information on parliamentary proceedings and Members' compensation and expenses, and the use of social media to provide timely information on Assembly issues. Since 2004, BC has accepted online submissions as part of committee consultation processes. These measures collectively constitute what we refer to as "e-democracy".

A recent Elections BC discussion paper<sup>1</sup> (see page 24 for a summary of the report by BC Chief Electoral

Officer Keith Archer) examined internet voting in jurisdictions around the world, pointing out challenges for e-voting — including issues around secrecy and security, the verification of voters, auditability, and cost-effectiveness. The discussion paper concluded that while e-voting may provide citizens with greater opportunity to vote, pending resolution of these challenges, the risks of e-voting at present outweigh the potential benefits for our province.

An electronic petitions system may offer a bridging opportunity, an incremental step toward broader engagement with voters online that encourages citizens' participation in parliamentary processes, as technology and our processes allow. Indeed, a growing list of jurisdictions already use e-petitions systems, providing a substantial bank of data on development, implementation and best practices for e-petitions systems.

Voter turnout has been in decline across developed democracies around the globe since the 1960s. In Canada, it has dropped from 75 per cent to just above 61 per cent over the last three federal elections. In BC, numbers over the last three elections show turnout falling from 71 per cent to around 55 per cent in the 2013 provincial general election. Implementation of new technologies in the processes of our parliamentary institutions may nurture citizens' engagement by streamlining avenues for participation in legislative processes.

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*The Hon. Linda Reid is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.*

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Improving rates of home internet access provide another reason to consider e-petitions. While internet access is by no means universal, home access rates are increasing all the time. Statistics Canada's 2012 *Canadian Internet Use Survey*<sup>2</sup> shows BC and Alberta enjoy the highest home access levels, at 86 per cent, while New Brunswick has the lowest, at 77 per cent. We in legislative bodies ought to join media and commercial sectors in exploring expanded public engagement opportunities made possible through improving internet access. These opportunities hold potential to bring our citizens closer to our assemblies, especially if they are able to appeal to a broad user demographic.

## Background

Petitioning by members of the public has been a feature of citizens' interactions with governing bodies since classical times. The first known formal petitions at the Westminster Parliament were presented to Richard II in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, with the practice becoming more widespread under his successors. This means petitioning has remained an avenue for citizens to bring their perspectives before parliament in the Westminster tradition for over 600 years. Despite 19<sup>th</sup> century changes to prevent House of Commons debate on submitted petitions, more than 10,000 petitions were submitted per session to the House over most of the century.

In BC, early Journals indicate petitions received by the colonial Council of Vancouver Island at least as early as 1859, seven years before the Colony of Vancouver Island formalized its union with the newly founded Colony of British Columbia. Today, petitions in BC are tabled in the House by an MLA. As at the British House of Commons, tabled petitions are not debated in the House. Nor is there a formal means in place for referral of a petition for further examination, by a parliamentary committee or otherwise. There is no mechanism in place at present for accepting e-petitions.

Until recently, guidelines for British Columbia's parliamentary petition submission process were only provided within our Standing Orders. Although the Standing Orders have been accessible to the public, they may not have been readily obvious to petitioners seeking guidance. Many tabled petitions have been ruled out of order for failing to meet the prescribed guidelines — for example, if the text of a petition does not appear at the top of each sheet or the petition requests any expenditure, grant or charge on the public revenue.

Petitions guidelines have recently been posted more prominently on our Assembly website. While the guidelines are unchanged, I'm optimistic as Speaker that this small step toward improved accessibility will support petitioner submission success.

Some of BC's more recent experience with petitions has in fact been overseen by Elections BC rather than the Legislative Assembly, under the province's *Recall and Initiative Act*. The act provides registered voters with a process for proposing new laws or changing existing laws through a petition. A successful initiative petition results in the proposed legislation being referred to the Select Standing Committee on Legislative Initiatives, which must then table a report recommending introduction of the draft bill to the House or reversion back to the Chief Electoral Officer for an initiative vote — a public referendum on the proposed legislation.

BC's Chief Electoral Officer has approved nine initiative applications since 1995, with applications addressing a wide range of topics, from electoral reform to balancing the provincial budget. Only one initiative petition obtained the required number of signatures to pass — a petition that challenged the 2010 implementation of a harmonized sales tax (HST) in the province. Public anger over the HST, manifested partially through the initiative petition process, resulted in a referendum that reversed the implementation of the tax which provided a clear example of the role petitions may play in influencing government policy.

Comprehensive guidelines covering the initiative process are readily available through the Elections BC website. Because the initiative process can result in the petition and draft bill being considered by the Select Standing Committee on Legislative Initiatives, as well as the possible introduction of a draft bill in the House, interest groups with substantial reach across the province have tended to favour the initiative process in conjunction with delivering petitions to the House. Like the Legislative Assembly, Elections BC does not accept e-petitions.

## Current E-petitions Systems

E-petitions systems operate in local, regional, national and international jurisdictions across the globe, with some systems now in operation for as long as 15 years. For example:

- The Parliament of Queensland, Australia, has accepted e-petitions since August 2002. An original 12-month trial quickly evolved into an ongoing system, and their e-petitions system works in close parallel with their paper-based system



## Petitions

	40th Parliament — Petitions		
<a href="#">Previous Parliaments</a> (Overview)	1st Session June 26, 2013 – February 11, 2014	2nd Session February 11, 2014 – October 6, 2014	3rd Session October 6, 2014 – Present

### 2014 Legislative Session: 3rd Session, 40th Parliament

A fundamental concept of parliamentary democracy is the right of the public to have access to parliament by way of petition. A petition can be from an individual or group and can relate to the passage of a bill or the government's consideration of an important public issue. Since the Legislative Assembly is a representative institution, it considers only those matters submitted to it by its own Members and petitions are no exception.

A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly must be based on the template attached below, be drafted in respectful terms and must comply with the following basic rules:

- All signatures must be original and written directly on the face of the petition, and not pasted or transferred to it. Petitions must be free of erasures or insertions.
- If a petition consists of more than one sheet of signatures, the text of the petition must appear at the top of each sheet. Each person petitioning the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia must print his or her name and address and sign his or her name under the text of the petition.
- Petitions must be written, typewritten or printed, and it is recommended that the paper be standard letter or legal size.
- Petitioners must be residents of British Columbia.
- Petitions must not request any expenditure, grant or charge on the public revenue, whether payable out of the consolidated revenue fund or out of moneys to be provided by the Legislative Assembly.

The form of a petition is prescribed by [Standing Order 73](#) and its accompanying [Appendix A](#).

Provided

Expanding Internet access has the potential to bring our citizens closer to our assemblies, writes BC Speaker the Hon. Linda Reid. She suggests e-petitions might be a bridging device before considering more complicated processes such as Internet voting.

- The Parliament of Scotland's e-petitions system has been in place since 1999 — virtually since the genesis of the Assembly. Scotland's process represents a key part of its parliament's commitment to increasing transparency, participation and openness in government
- In Britain, the House of Commons is now embarking on what is at least its second generation e-petitions system, after the House took over from a previous iteration run by the government out of 10 Downing Street
- Other e-petitions systems can be found in a number of municipalities in Norway; in the regional parliament of Wales; in the United States and South Korea; and at the European Parliament
- In Canada, Quebec and the Northwest Territories have working e-petitions systems

#### Parliamentary vs. Non-Governmental Systems

There is an important distinction to be recognized between e-petitions systems established and

administered by parliamentary institutions and less formal e-petitions systems run by non-governmental organizations. Online services like Avaaz, Change.org, and others, provide people with the tools to create and distribute e-petitions. A Change.org petition demanding review of a bullying suicide case in Nova Scotia recently played an important role in the government's decision to call an independent review of the case.

As parliamentarians, we might reflect upon the wisdom of leaving e-petitions processes in the hands of non-governmental groups like Change.org. While providing an avenue for the delivery of public perspectives on issues may be a central goal of e-petitions systems administered by both non-governmental and parliamentary bodies, public institutions may choose to place a higher priority on verifiability and auditability than would non-governmental groups.

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If parliamentary institutions have practical, transparent and auditable e-petitions system requirements in place, these requirements may exert pressure on private organizations to maintain similar quality in their own efforts — if they wish to present their petitions to parliamentary bodies. As an end result, parliamentarians could count on consistent quality in tabled petitions.

### **E-petitions System Precedents**

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With many e-petitioning processes in place for a decade or more, there is a substantial and increasing body of data by which to measure successes and challenges encountered in administration of e-petitions systems. This also means a good deal of material to help us develop best practices.

#### *Administration — Quantitative vs. Qualitative*

In January 2013, the White House responded to a now infamous petition on its “We the People” e-petitions site demanding that the US begin building a real-life Death Star by 2016, after the petition surpassed the 25,000-signature threshold required for a formal response. Citizens’ enthusiasm for online petitions drove the White House response threshold from an initial 5,000 to 25,000 signatures. Then in January 2013, following the success of initiatives like the Death Star petition, the requirement was raised to its current 100,000 signatures.

The British House of Commons has also set its threshold at 100,000 signatures, with additional checks in the system. Petitions crossing the 100,000 participant line must be sponsored or “championed” by an MP before being referable to the House Backbench Business Committee, which may then schedule a debate on the petition topic in the House. Note that it is not required to schedule such a debate. In many cases, the committee has not in fact been allocated adequate time in the House to allow for such debates to occur. Broader implications of this “bottleneck” warrant a little further consideration when it comes to transparency of, and voter confidence in, the process.

The Welsh and Scottish parliaments use systems that rely on admissibility criteria and use no signature threshold — a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. Any matter judged by the petitions committee to be of valid concern to citizens, regardless of the number of signees, may be acted upon by the committee, which has a range of options for action at its disposal.

#### *Protection from Undue Influence by Lobby Groups, etc.*

In traditional Westminster-style systems, tabling of

petitions in the House is an end in itself. If a petitions process becomes more responsive, with a range of actions by parliament and/or government available and more resources invested in follow-up, it becomes increasingly important to ensure valuable — and limited — time and resources are allocated for debate on topics of genuine public interest, and not on the priorities of small special interest or lobby groups. Several systems make use of a petitions committee, allowing for close oversight and support during the development and active stages of a petition, and providing bona fide petitioners with every opportunity for success.

#### *Direct and Indirect Access to Parliament*

One central goal of an e-petitions system can be to improve both direct and indirect access to government or parliament, where “direct” means petitioners submit petitions directly to legislative bodies (like the White House “We the People” system) and “indirect” means petitions can be submitted only through a sponsoring member of the legislative body (as at the British House of Commons). As another option, petitions to the Scottish Parliament are submitted to the Public Petitions Committee by anyone — anywhere in the world, in fact. The Members of the Scottish Parliament who comprise the committee then consider merits and relevance of the petition on a qualitative level before moving forward with action.

#### *Technical Challenges*

One technical issue addressed in different ways by various jurisdictions is the verification of petitioner names. This auditability is substantially less complex — and is perhaps less critical — than has proven the case with full-blown e-voting systems. Queensland requires no petitioner name validation. There is a requirement that petitioners provide an email address, but addresses are not checked. This protocol may seem surprising, but it mirrors their paper petitions process, where no verification is required unless fraud is suggested.

By way of contrast, the UK uses a three-part verification process, requiring (1) affirmation of UK residency and a valid address; (2) entry of randomly generated words, designed to block automated systems from signing petitions; and (3) sending of information to a valid email address containing a link for petitioners to follow to verify their signature.

Another technical challenge worth considering lies in collection of signatures on the internet. Raising support online requires very different skills from the type of canvassing associated with paper petitions.

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Because the challenge of collecting signatures online has proven virtually prohibitive in some jurisdictions, it may prove worthwhile to consider providing support for petitioners on this crucial piece of the petitioning process when designing a system.

#### *Costs of Development and Operation*

Providing voters with direct participation in parliamentary processes can require a substantial investment. For example, Elections BC reported \$34,808,125 in expenses to administer the province's 2013 general election — \$10.96 per registered voter for this opportunity to participate in the election process. In its study of e-voting, Elections BC found e-voting systems cost the same or more to administer than traditional paper ballot voting systems. By contrast, setup and administration of e-petitions systems provide an increased number of opportunities for participation in parliamentary processes at a fraction of the expense.

Quebec has a population of around 8.1 million people. The Quebec National Assembly's system for start-up, administration and signing of e-petitions was implemented in 2010 at a cost of approximately 800 person-days of work.

The Northwest Territories has a population of about 43,500. Start-up costs for the Northwest Territories e-petitions system were in the neighbourhood of \$4,000 with an annual administration cost of approximately \$800 — amounting to nine cents per capita for start-up and two cents per capita for annual administration.

The UK has a population of around 63 million. The House of Commons e-petitions site was built by an in-house IT development group in eight weeks at a cost of £80,700. Annual staffing costs are currently estimated to be around £67,500. This represents a cost of £0.00128 per capita for setup, and a little less for annual staffing. It's noteworthy that these actual setup and operating costs fall in marked contrast to estimates for a system proposed by the House of Commons Procedure Committee in 2008, which suggested £500,000 to build the system and £750,000 in annual administration costs — still far more cost effective than something like administering a general election.

Given population and system variation from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, these examples aren't directly comparable; however, they do give a general picture of the relative cost effectiveness of investing in an e-petitions system as part of a strategy to encourage political engagement and participation.

#### *Voter Participation*

Do electronic petitioning systems necessarily stimulate broader voter engagement and increased political participation? Data indicates e-petitions systems do not in and of themselves create broader participation. However, supported by internet access rates, I would argue that e-petitions systems hold a healthy potential to facilitate participation if citizens do become engaged with the processes of their parliamentary institutions.

Several of the systems mentioned have had remarkable uptake. The UK Parliament reportedly received 22,000 e-petitions in its first five months, compared to an average of 316 per session over the preceding 20 years. As mentioned above, both US and Westminster systems had to adjust signature thresholds to compensate for enthusiastic uptake.

Keith Archer, Chief Electoral Officer in BC, recently asserted that there is no compelling evidence that online voting systems result in greater participation.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, research shows jurisdictions like Queensland and Germany have seen little change in either the number of petitions or overall signatures following introduction of e-petitions systems. With the increasing rates of home internet access discussed above, one thing is clear: while an internet-based system doesn't necessarily mean more people will participate, it certainly means greater numbers have an option to participate from the convenience of their homes.

Unfortunately, studies suggest that the largest demographic of e-petition participants at present (examining German, Scottish and Queensland examples) is similar to that of traditional petitions — middle-aged and older men with above-average formal education. So while a potential for streamlining participation exists, we have work to do in engaging demographic groups that are typically reluctant to participate in legislative processes.

#### *Encouraging Voter Participation*

The Hansard Society suggests that key elements in encouraging participation include (1) clarity around the process itself and (2) public understanding of available outcomes.<sup>4</sup> In other words: What can a petition accomplish, and what can it not be expected to accomplish? Petitioner satisfaction improves when petitioners understand how their submissions fit into broader parliamentary processes.

It is important for petitioners to receive sound information regarding realistic expectations with respect to outcomes. The UK government suggests



e-petitions are an easy way to influence government policy in the UK, yet clear explanation of what that influence might comprise is not explicit. By contrast, a study of the Scottish Public Petitions Committee “revealed that the administration’s discretionary power was frequently used to approve of formally inadmissible e-petitions. Moreover, the personal support and advice provided by the administration have positive effects on the overall acceptance and assessment of the e-petition system by the petitioners.... Through these personal contacts, overly optimistic expectations on the likely outcome of an e-petition can be put into a more realistic perspective.”<sup>5</sup>

Who is the petitioner engaging through their petition — government or parliament? Will petitions be directed toward an executive-focused, Westminster-style parliament or to a committee with significant powers for action on petitions? Is the system set up so that petitions receive government responses with a clear link to policy-makers? Or is it set up primarily to prompt debate on petition topics — through committee inquiry, debate in the chamber, informally, or otherwise? Whichever the case, petitioners who trust the transparency of the process tend to be more satisfied with the results, whether their petition is successful or not. This is a key finding to consider.

### Summary and Conclusions

Research shows that creating an e-petitions system will not automatically result in improved citizen engagement or participation. But a well-crafted e-petitions system is comparatively economical and can provide voters with an accessible tool to encourage awareness of legislative affairs and stimulate political engagement more generally.

Here are some best practices to consider when developing an e-petitions system with voter engagement and participation as a priority:

- Provide a clear and transparent petition process to encourage realistic petitioner expectations
- Provide technical support to enable petitioner success
- Consider whether responsibility for receiving petitions should be: assigned to a parliamentary committee with clearly stated powers to act on petitions; tabled at parliament by a sponsoring member of the legislative body; or submitted to some other parliamentary or government body in your jurisdiction
- Consider whether a qualitative or quantitative threshold for action on petitions, or a combination of both, would work better for your jurisdiction
- Provide clear guidelines about committee, parliamentary, and governmental obligations to respond to petitions.

As the longest-serving current Member of British Columbia’s Legislative Assembly, I have participated on both governing and opposition sides of the House. For now, though, I speak primarily from my perspective as Speaker — as a parliamentarian, motivated to support and strengthen our democratic institutions in BC through improved transparency and increased accountability in our parliamentary bodies.

Faced with trends of declining voter turnout and general disengagement from politics across developed democracies, we parliamentarians must concern ourselves with opportunities for reform and for evolution in our institutions, aimed at engaging voters and building relationships with demographic groups traditionally less inclined to participate in parliamentary processes.

In BC, we may certainly wish to consider an electronic petitions system as an addition to the e-democracy measures now in place. Despite the complexities of ensuring clarity and transparency, and the challenge of finding ways to encourage participation by underrepresented demographics, an e-petitions system offers a relatively low cost, low-stakes opportunity for refining current processes — especially compared to more complex, higher-stakes options such as development of a system for e-voting in general elections.

I look forward, with interest, to further study and discussion on the development — and especially successes — of e-petitions systems in jurisdictions around us, as well as other opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions.

### Notes

- 1 *Independent Panel on Internet Voting: Recommendations Report to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.* <http://www.internetvotingpanel.ca/docs/recommendations-report.pdf>
- 2 Statistics Canada. *Canadian Internet Use Survey, 2012.* <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/131126/dq131126d-eng.htm>
- 3 “Voice of BC, July 10, 2014.” <http://vimeo.com/100449283>. Between approximately 25:00 minutes and 30:20 minutes.
- 4 Hansard Society. *What’s Next for e-petitions?* <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/What-next-for-e-petitions.pdf>
- 5 Ralf Linder and Ulrich Riehm. “Electronic Petitions and Institutional Modernization. International Parliamentary E-Petition Systems in Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of eDemocracy and Open Government*. 1:1, 2009, p. 6. Viewed at: <http://www.jedem.org/article/view/3>



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# Online Political Activity in Canada: The Hype and the Facts

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**Tamara A. Small, Harold Jansen, Frédérick Bastien, Thierry Giasson and Royce Koop**

*How do Canadians engage with the political content provided by governments, political parties and parliamentarians in Canada? Employing data from the 2014 Canadian Online Citizenship Survey, this article explores how Canadians use digital communications to become informed about, discuss and/or participate in politics. The results suggest that less than half of respondents use the Internet to engage in Canadian politics and while governments, politicians and parties have made extensive forays into cyberspace, politics is a minor online activity for Canadians.*

Over the last two decades, there has been a revolution in communication technology with the widespread adoption of computer networks and digital technologies. There are very few areas of society, economics and culture that have remained untouched by these technologies. Not surprisingly, digital technologies have also infiltrated the world of Canadian politics. They have changed how representative institutions communicate and respond to citizens. In the mid-1990s, government departments, political parties and parliamentarians across Canada began creating websites in order to inform and, potentially, engage citizens. More recently, social media, including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, have become mainstays of political communication in Canada. Indeed, as of October 2014, 80 per cent of federal Members of Parliament were using Twitter. One can also follow tweets of the Senate of Canada and the Library of Parliament. While we know much about the online presences of governments, political parties and parliamentarians in Canada,<sup>1</sup> less is known about the extent to which Canadians engage with the political content provided by these different actors.<sup>2</sup>

This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring the online political activity of Canadians – that is, the use of digital communications to become informed about, discuss and/or participate in politics. We draw on data from the 2014 *Canadian Online Citizenship Survey*. This survey, developed by *Online Citizenship/Citoyenneté en ligne*,<sup>3</sup> was conducted by telephone between February and May 2014. The 2,021 respondents were asked a battery of questions regarding their technological habits and capabilities, as well as questions probing both their online and offline political activities and attitudes. All data presented below are weighted to correct for unequal chance of being selected according to the province and the household size. Here we focus on answering one question: how are Canadians using online communication to engage in democratic citizenship? This is accomplished in two ways; first, we explore whether our respondents make use of political websites and social media offered by governments and traditional political actors. Next, we examine online political participation, that is, the extent to which our respondents participate in political activities, such as signing petitions or posting political commentary, using the Internet. In both cases, we pay special attention to the relationship between young Canadians and online political activity. The results are sobering; less than half of respondents use the Internet to engage in Canadian politics. While governments, politicians and parties have made extensive forays into cyberspace, politics is a minor online activity for Canadians.

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*Tamara Small is a political science professor at the University of Guelph specializing in digital politics. Univeristy of Lethbridge political scientist Harold Jansen researches the role of Internet in Canadian politics. Frédérick Bastien teaches political science at Université de Montréal specializing in political communication and social media. Université Laval political scientist Thierry Giasson explores emerging media and political communication. Royce Koop, an assitant professor at the University of Manitoba, has written about political blogs and parliamentary websites.*

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## Canadian Online Citizenship Survey

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Before looking in-depth at online political activity, the data provide a snapshot of the current state of Internet use by Canadians. Not surprisingly, we find that Internet use is ubiquitous in Canada. In the previous 12 months, 87.8 per cent of respondents used the Internet. Indeed, Internet use is part of daily life for most of our respondents. More than 75 per cent of our Internet users went online at least once a day from home, with more than two-thirds of daily online users accessing the Internet several times a day from home. Our respondents access the Internet using a variety of devices; daily use occurred on desktop computers (53.5 per cent of Internet users), laptops (51.2 per cent of Internet users), smartphones (48.3 per cent of Internet users) and tablets (32.1 per cent of Internet users). Social media is popular within our sample. We find that 56.6 per cent of all respondents and 63.4 per cent of Internet users have an account on the world's most popular social networking site, Facebook. Twitter use lags far behind Facebook. Only 18.1 per cent of all respondents and 20.4 per cent of Internet users have an account on Twitter. Hence, our data show that there are plenty of opportunities for our respondents to engage in online political activities given how regular and diverse their Internet use is. The question is – do they?

information available to citizens and businesses in an efficient and cost-effective manner that is not limited by location or time of day.<sup>4</sup> Today, Canadians can pay taxes and parking tickets, renew a driver licence and apply for government jobs online. In some ways, we can see that those investments are well received. More than half of our Internet users report that they visited a website of the federal or provincial government while 44 per cent had visited a municipal government website in the previous 12 months.

The websites of political parties and politicians including elected representatives do not attract the same attention as e-government. Like e-government, party and politician websites can offer citizens information (e.g. policy statements, biographies, speeches, event calendars and news releases) and mobilization opportunities (e.g. membership/donation/volunteer forms, e-newsletters, blogs and online polls).<sup>5</sup> However, when asked whether they had visited the website of a political party or a politician in the previous 12 months, less than 15 per cent of respondents had done so. As noted, Canadian political actors are now regularly using social media as a political communication tool. Sites such as Facebook and Twitter are great sources of instantaneous and unmediated political information for political junkies. Research shows that political parties and politicians

**Table 1. Accessing Political Content**

	<b>All Respondents N=2021</b>	<b>Internet Users N=1800</b>
Visited a federal government website	49.5%	56.3%
Visited a provincial government website	46.6%	53.0%
Visited a municipal government website	39.1%	44.4%
Visited a political party or politician website	13.0%	14.7%
Friended or followed a political actor on Facebook	6.3%	7.1%
Followed a political actor on Twitter	3.9%	4.5%

### Accessing Politics Online

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In assessing online political activity, we first explore the extent to which Canadians access different types of political content online including the Internet presences of governments and politicians (*Table 1*). Our findings show that e-government trumps e-politics. In Canada, governments at all levels have made considerable investments in e-government. E-government makes government services and

typically use social media to broadcast party-related information including news releases and stories from official websites and YouTube videos to citizens.<sup>6</sup> However, political parties and leaders, especially the major ones, tend to avoid the interactive aspects of social media. Two-way communication between parties/leaders and citizens on social media is limited. The inclusion of social media to the online repertoires of politicians and parties has done little to spur greater connection with citizens. We asked our respondents if

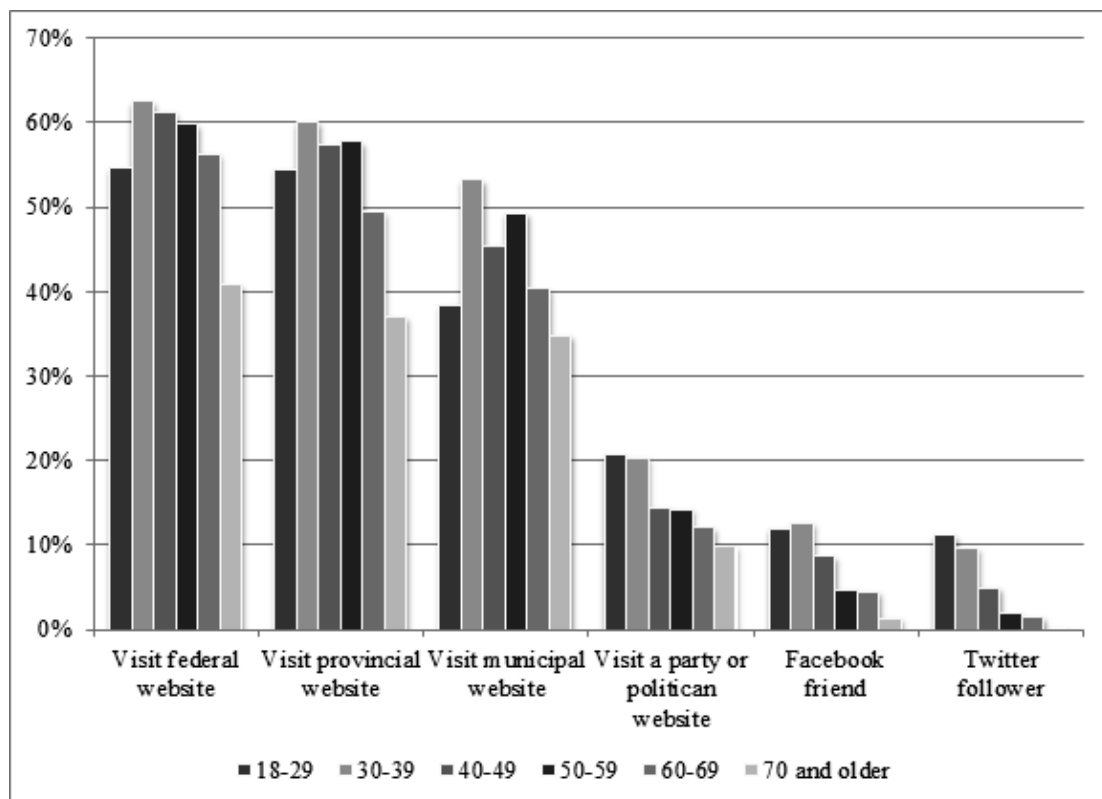
they were a Facebook friend/member or Twitter follower of the official page/account of a Canadian politician or political party at any level. As *Table 1* shows only 7.1 per cent of Internet users are Facebook friends while only 4.4 per cent are followers on Twitter. Fewer than six per cent of all respondents were both (5.9 per cent). This means that Web 1.0 (websites) is more common than Web 2.0 (social media) amongst our respondents with traditional websites being a more common way to access a political party or politician.<sup>7</sup> These Canadian findings are quite a bit lower than the online activity level in the United States. The Pew Research Internet Project, which has been documenting online political activity in the United States since 2002, reports that 12 per cent of American adults were a friend or follower of a political figure or candidate in 2012. This represents an increase from 2008, when the figure stood at only three per cent.<sup>8</sup>

As mentioned, our data allow us to pay special attention to the relationship between age and online political activity. This is particularly relevant because Canada has witnessed a decline in voter turnout, most noticeably among young voters. Turnout in the 2011 federal election was 61.1 per cent while youth voter turnout was 38.8 per cent. While both numbers are slightly higher than the previous election in 2008,

they are comparable to turnout levels seen in other elections since 2000. Younger Canadians are generally less informed about and interested in politics than older Canadians.<sup>9</sup> Some see the Internet and social media as ideal ways to reach young people, who are said to be increasingly apathetic about politics.<sup>10</sup> In a previous edition of *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, British Columbia MLA Linda Reid suggests that parliamentarians can employ digital technologies to facilitate interaction with young people by designing youth-friendly online tools.<sup>11</sup> Having grown up with digital technologies, young people tend to be digital innovators and spend more time using digital technologies than their older counterparts. For instance, while our data finds comparable use of the Internet by age, our 18-29 year old respondents tended to use social media more than older cohorts.<sup>12</sup> The Internet, in this perspective, is seen as a mobilizing force creating political opportunities for disenfranchised youth.<sup>13</sup>

*Figure 1* reports the accessing political content metrics by age cohort for all respondents. Overall, young people (18 – 29 year olds) are not the most likely cohort to be in contact with government and politicians using the Internet. Indeed, when it comes to e-government at any level, the youngest cohort is near

**Figure 1. Accessing Political Content By Age Cohort (N=2021)**



the bottom. Respondents aged 30-39 lead on four of the six metrics and are second on the other two categories. However, there is one interesting finding with regards to our younger respondents aged 18-29 from this data. This age cohort tends to access politics via social media more so than other cohorts. While we do need to be careful not to draw too many conclusions given how infrequent social media is used for accessing politics in general, 32.8 per cent of all respondents that follow a political actor on Twitter are 18-29 year-olds while 21.3 per cent of all Facebook friends are of the youngest cohort. Even with the youngest, Web 1.0 is prominent.

What might explain the moderate engagement with e-government and the very minimal engagement with party politics online? Within political communication, new technologies do not completely displace previous technologies. Rather, new technologies are used along side of older ones. The Internet and social media might be the most recent technological ways of getting in touch with governments, parties and politicians but they certainly are not the only way. Indeed, at the federal level, online service delivery is part of a multi-channel framework called Service Canada, where programs and services of the federal government are accessible from offices across the country and call centres in addition to the web.<sup>14</sup> We find that our respondents make use of these different channels when engaging with governments. When asked about the preferred method of contact when one had a question, problem or task requiring access with the municipal, provincial or federal government, contact by telephone was the most preferred method. Forty per cent of respondents chose telephone contact compared to 25 per cent for e-mail contact and 14 per cent who preferred using a website.

**Table 2. Method Used to Contact Government or Political Actors in the Previous 12 Months (N=358)**

By telephone	32.1%
In person	31.9%
By mail	18.1%
By Internet	15.7%
By e-mail	11.7%
<i>Note: Because multiple choices were allowed, total is higher than 100%.</i>	

We also heard from respondents that had actually been in contact with the government or elected officials

in the previous 12 months (*Table 2*). About 18 per cent of respondents had contacted a government official, elected representative or political party to share an opinion about a political issue. When actually engaging in contact, our respondents were twice as likely to use telephone and in-person meetings than e-mail or the Internet. Even the post, or snail mail, was more likely to be used. Even though Canadians use the Internet regularly, traditional ways of contacting government and politicians remain popular. Online contact should be seen as merely one of many ways to access political actors and institutions in Canada.

### Online Political Participation

We now turn our attention to online political participation. While the Internet allows for greater connection with government and elected officials, it may also allow citizens to participate in political activities. According to Verba et al., political participation is an “activity that is intended to or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly, government action.”<sup>15</sup> Arguably, the Internet could enhance participation. As with the discussion of e-government, the Internet can lower barriers to participation. Website and social media can make participating easier and more efficient with minimal cost.<sup>16</sup> As noted above, the Internet may increase levels of participation by opening up politics to the politically disenfranchised and marginalized. *Table 3* reports our findings on online participation.

The most common online political activity among respondents was signing an online petition or e-petitions. Petitions have long been used by citizens to make appeals to public authorities. As a democratic practice, petitioning is important because it is often a bottom up or grassroots initiative. E-petitions can reach large number of citizens regardless of location and can ‘go viral’ by being shared on social media and e-mail. There are numerous online petition sites that Canadians can make use of including *petitiononlinecanada.com* and *change.org*. A recent example includes a *change.org* petition, calling for a public inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women, which obtained more than 300,000 signatures in four months.<sup>17</sup> One in five Internet users signed an e-petition in the last year. That is two percentage points higher than respondents who reported they had signed an offline petition in the same time frame. Indeed, this was the only case in our survey where an activity was more common online than offline. While donating money to a political organization or political party was relatively rare in our sample, traditional means of contributing such as mail or telephone are



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**Table 3. Online Participation**

	<b>All Respondents (N=2021)</b>	<b>Internet Users (N=1800)</b>
Signed a petition online	18.2%	20.5%
Shared political content on Facebook	13.5%	15.2%
Online persuasion	11.7%	13.1%
Posted about politics on Facebook	9.6%	10.8%
Commented on political news	7.0%	7.9%
Retweeted political content	3.6%	4.1%
Gave online to an organization	3.1%	3.4%
Written a political tweet on Twitter	3.1%	3.5%
Gave online to a political party	2.5%	2.8%

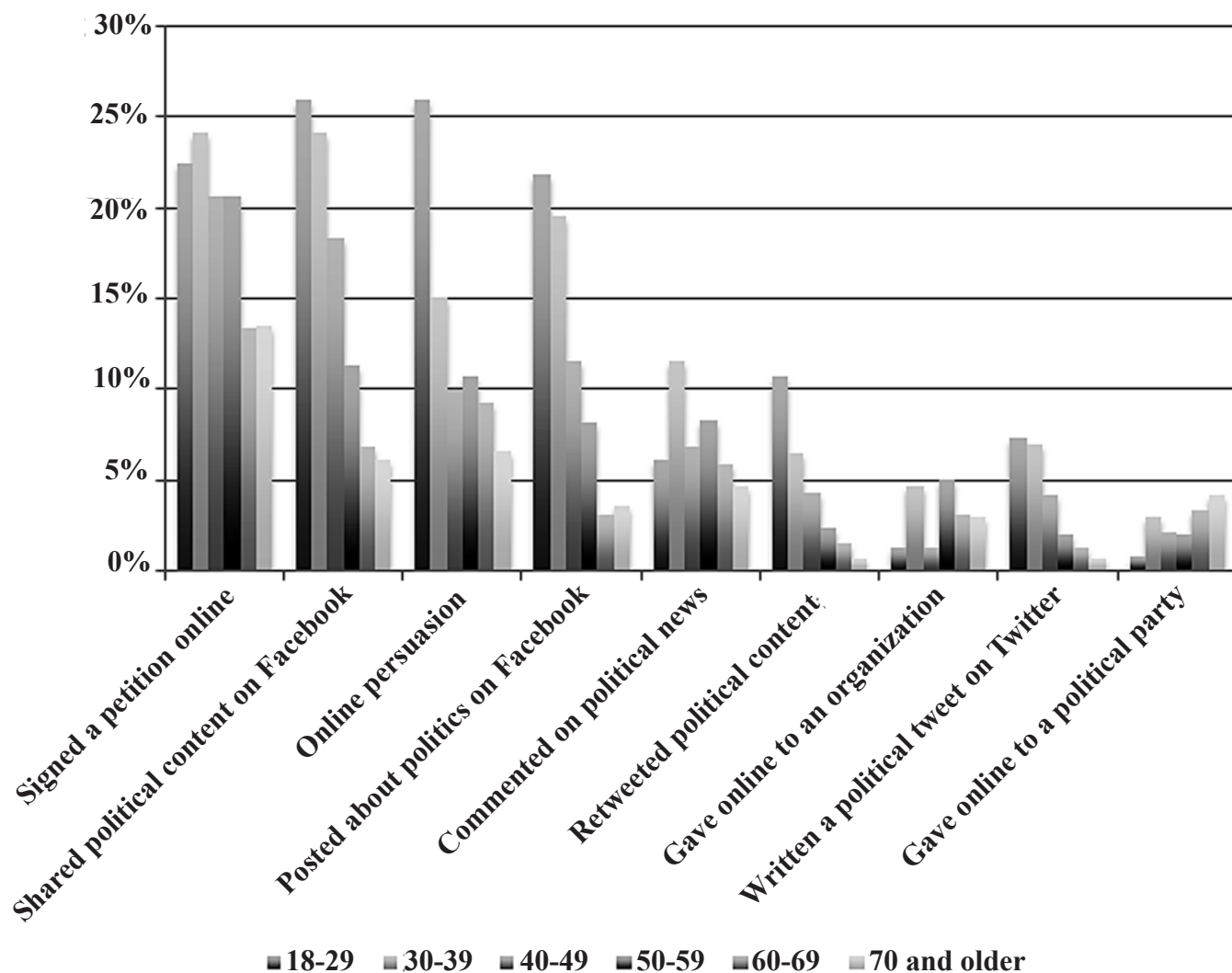
more commonly used than using the Internet. We find that 8.5 per cent of our respondents made a donation to a political party in the previous year. Of those 70 per cent donated offline compared to 30 per cent online; that amounts to 2.5 per cent of all survey respondents using the Internet to contribute. Similarly, almost six per cent of respondents contributed financially to a political organization such as Greenpeace or the Canadian Taxpayers Federation; 67 per cent did so offline compared to 33 per cent using the Internet (3.1 per cent of all survey respondents).

We saw above that friending or following political actors on social media were infrequent amongst our respondents; however, we should not take this as an indication that social media is not a venue for citizen participation. Indeed, many respondents shared political content and expressed political views on Facebook, though Twitter appears to have less resonance among respondents for online political activity. As *Table 3* shows, sharing political content on Facebook is the second most common online political activity. We find that 15.2 per cent of Internet users shared political news and stories for their friends while one in 10 Internet users posted a comment about politics on Facebook for others to read. There has been considerable talk about the role of Twitter in politics. For instance, the 2011 federal election was dubbed the ‘Twitter election’ by the news media as was the 2012 Québec election.<sup>18</sup> However, our data suggests this is more hype than fact. Not only did our respondents rarely follow political actors on Twitter, political engagement activities were also limited. Fewer than five percent of respondents engaged in Twitter politics: 3.6 per cent of all respondents and 4.1

per cent of Internet users retweeted or shared political content such as news or the tweets of others on their own feeds while only 3.1 per cent of all respondents and 3.5 per cent of Internet users had written a political tweet on the social media. So, despite its 140 character limit, which lowers users’ requirement of time and thought investment for content generation, very few respondents opted to share an opinion here.

Finally we find evidence of discursive participation in our sample. Discursive participation concerns discourse about politics with others including talking, debating and deliberation.<sup>19</sup> Discursive participation can take place offline (face-to-face exchanges or by telephone) or online (Internet forums, e-mail or social media). We saw above that some respondents engaged in discursive participation on Facebook by posting comments about political topics for their friends. We also find that just under eight per cent of our sample of Internet users engaged in discursive participation by commenting on a political story on a news organization’s website (*Table 3*). While there is certainly evidence of online discursive participation in our sample, this also is an area where offline political activity is more common. We asked our respondents, if they tried to persuade other to adhere to their political views. Almost half of the sample did so (47.8 per cent). When asked whether these discussions took place offline, using the Internet or both, we found that the vast majority (73.4 per cent) discussed politics with others offline, 1.1 per cent did so only online and the final quarter of respondents did both. Again, the Internet is merely one way to engage in politics and still far from being the dominant one.

Figure 2. Online Political Participation by Age Cohort (N=2021)



Earlier we explored the issue of age. As noted, there is much speculation about whether young people who are technology-savvy will engage in Internet politics. We saw above that younger Canadians did not access e-government services as much as older cohorts. However, there is a much more positive story when looking at online political participation. *Figure 2* shows each of our metrics by age cohort. While our younger respondents age 18-29 are less likely to make an online donation to a political party or a political organization, they seem quite apt to do many other online activities and again, we see a connection between young people and social media politics. For instance, our youngest respondents are more likely to use Facebook for politics by writing a political post and

sharing political content. Twitter politics also appear to be more appealing to young people than other age groups. To be sure, Twitter is used minimally within our sample, but we do see that young respondents are more likely to tweet and retweet political content. This finding coincides with American data. The Pew Center Internet Project found political engagement on social media sites was especially common among the youngest Americans (18-24 year olds).<sup>20</sup> Young people are also more apt to engage in online persuasion than older respondents. There may be some merit on the part of governments, parties and politicians, in providing specialized content for young people on social media, as Linda Reid suggested.

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## Conclusions

Our results paint a sober picture of the extent to which Canadians make use of digital technologies to access, discuss and engage in politics. It is worth noting that surveys such as this tend to over-represent the politically engaged and interested. So, if anything, these are optimistic projections of the extent of online access and participation, which makes the results even more sobering. Despite all of the opportunities made available through Internet politics including extensive political information, connection with governments and politicians, the ability to share and discuss politics with others, or mobilization opportunities, we find there is little evidence that our respondents took advantages of them in large numbers. The average number of all respondents that accessed political contents including e-government and party/politician websites was just slightly over 25 per cent (26.4 per cent) while less than 10 per cent of them engaged in online political participation activity (7.8 per cent). It appears that the Internet is just one of many venues by which Canadians participate in politics. Indeed, older, traditional ways to doing politics (face-to-face or telephone) remain important in the Internet age. Overall, politics is a minor online activity. On a positive note, however, we see some evidence that young Canadians, who have grown up in the digital age, are more engaged in online political activity than other Canadians.

What are the implications of the findings of the 2014 *Canadian Online Citizenship Survey* for political practitioners? They provide a reminder that new communication technology supplements rather than replaces older ones. The data shows that face-to-face, telephone and snail mail are still important in the digital age. Different communication technologies will resonate with different audiences. For instance, “householders,” the printed materials sent by MPs to inform their constituents about parliamentary activities, remain a useful way to communicate. This is because they are delivered to mailboxes, and the information gathering effort on the part of constituents is minimal. The same can be said for op-ed pieces written in local newspapers. At the same time, the Internet and social media are important for other citizens, especially the politically engaged who participate in politics in as many mediums as possible. What this does mean, however, is that political communication in the digital age is multifaceted. Political practitioners need to be aware of what different types of communication can and cannot accomplish and they must select their tools accordingly.

## Notes

- 1 See Jeffrey Roy. *E-Government in Canada: Transformation for the Digital Age*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006; Sanford Borins, Kenneth Kernaghan, David Brown, Nick Bontis, Perri 6, and Fred Thompson. *Digital State at the Leading Edge*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007; Tamara A. Small. “The Not-So Social Network: The Use of Twitter by Canada’s Party Leaders” in Alex Marland, Thierry Giasson and Tamara A. Small (eds.), *Political Communication in Canada: Meet the Press and Tweet the Rest*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014.
- 2 Two notable exceptions would be the *enpolitique.com* project, which explored how Quebecers engaged with digital technologies during the 2012 provincial election, and the *Canadian Internet Project*. Also see: Quinn Albaugh and Christopher Waddell. “Social media and political inequality,” in Elisabeth Gidengil and Heather Bastedo (eds.), *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014.
- 3 *Online Citizenship/Citoyenneté en ligne* is a SSHRC funded project exploring online political activity and democratic citizenship in Canada. For more information about the project, visit: <http://www.oc-cel.ca>.
- 4 Roy, 2006.
- 5 Darin Barney. “The Internet and political communications in Canadian party politics: The view from 2004” in Alain-G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanguay (eds.) *Canadian parties in transition*, Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2007, pp. 371–382.
- 6 Small, 2014.
- 7 As the name implies, Web 2.0 is an advancement on the early Web or Web 1.0. In Web 1.0, users are passive recipients of content -- they are audiences in the same way as they are with television or radio. In Web 2.0, users are active; they do not simply read or listen to online content, they actively contribute to it.
- 8 Aaron Smith. *Civic Engagement in the Digital Age*. Pew Research Center, 2013. URL: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/04/25/civic-engagement-in-the-digital-age/> (Retrieved: September 24, 2014).
- 9 Elisabeth Gidengil, André Blais, Neil Nevitte, and Richard Nadeau. *Citizens*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014.
- 10 See B. D. Loader. *Young Citizens in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- 11 Linda Reid. “Engaging Youth Through Social Media.” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 35:4, 2012. URL: <http://www.revparl.ca/english/issue.asp?param=213&art=1500> (Retrieved: September 24, 2014).
- 12 While 18-29 years do use social media more than older respondents, it should be pointed out that there is little difference in general Internet use in terms of age cohort in the survey.

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- 13 This perspective is known in the literature as the 'mobilization hypothesis.' The hypothesis holds that by providing both the resources and the access to the political system to those who would otherwise not participate, the Internet can significantly change the political environment. This perspective not only applies to young people but other political disenfranchised and marginalized groups based on things like income or ethnicity (e.g. African Americans in the United States).
- 14 Patrice Dutil, Cosmo Howard, John Langford, and Jeffrey Roy. Rethinking Government-Public Relationships in a Digital World: Customers, Clients or Citizens? *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 4:1, 2007 pp. 77-90.
- 15 Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Scholzman, and Henry E. Brady. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- 16 Kay Lehman Scholzman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady. "Weapon of the Strong? Participatory Inequality and the Internet." *Perspectives on Politics* 8:2, 2010, pp. 487-509.
- 17 Petitioning Hon. Kellie Leitch, Minister for the Status of Women: Call a public inquiry into hundreds of missing and murdered Aboriginal women like my cousin Loretta Saunders. URL: <http://www.change.org/p/hon-kellie-leitch-minister-for-the-status-of-women-call-a-public-inquiry-into-hundreds-of-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-like-my-cousin-loretta-saunders> (Retrieved: September 24, 2014).
- 18 See Laura Payton. "The House: The Twitter election: Why what happens on Twitter matters to everyone." CBC News, 2011. URL: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/the-house-the-twitter-election-1.1044391> (Retrieved: September 24, 2014.); Thierry Giasson, et al. "#Qc2012: l'utilisation de Twitter par les partis" in *Les Québécois aux urnes: les partis, les médias et les citoyens en campagne*, in Frédérick Bastien, Éric Bélanger and François Gélneau (eds.), 135-148. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2013, pp. 135-148.
- 19 Michael X. Delli Carpini, Fay Lomax Cook, and Lawrence R. Jacobs. "Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7:1, 2014, pp. 315-344.
- 20 Pew Research Center. *Youngest Americans Are the Most Politically Active on Social Networking Sites*. 2013. URL: <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/youngest-americans-are-the-most-politically-active-on-social-networking-sites/> (Retrieved: September 24, 2014.)
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# *The Implications of Social Media for Parliamentary Privilege and Procedure*

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Joanne McNair

*Does social media present a substantive challenge to parliamentary procedure? And, if so, can existing parliamentary conventions and practice adequately respond to the challenges of the digital age? In this article, the author explores incidents where social media was used to violate or circumvent a standing order or parliamentary convention, or to challenge parliamentary privilege in order to answer these questions. She concludes that while social media is simply another form of communication which can conflict with and challenge parliamentary conventions and rules in the same way as more traditional forms of communication, parliamentarians should be aware that its “instantness” can set it apart and expand their audience.*

In a 2009 interview, UK Conservative Party leader David Cameron was asked if he was on Twitter. Cameron replied he was not, adding: “I think that politicians do have to think about what we say and that the trouble with Twitter – the instantness of it”<sup>1</sup> might result in too many tweets making a twit – to paraphrase the continuation of Cameron’s own infamous quote.

Social media has been around for several years now, and its use by elected officials – still a relatively new phenomenon – has led to a number of incidents in various jurisdictions in Canada (and elsewhere) that have challenged age-old parliamentary conventions and rules. While there is a growing body of research focusing on how politicians use social media, particularly during election campaigns, little attention has been paid to the procedural side of this trend. A sufficient number of incidents raised in various parliamentary jurisdictions over the past few years allow us to classify them into two main categories:

1. Social media used to violate or circumvent a standing order or parliamentary convention;
2. Social media used to challenge parliamentary privilege.

This paper will look at both categories of social media-related incidents and how Speakers and legislatures have sought to address the issues raised by them. The question we hope to answer is if social media presents a unique challenge to parliamentary procedure, can existing parliamentary conventions and practice adequately respond to the challenges of the digital age?

## **Use of Social Media to Violate or Circumvent a Standing Order or Parliamentary Convention**

Within this category, we can distinguish between two types of occurrence, one where the use of social media is incidental to the rule violation, and the other where the use of social media is deliberate.

Incidents which fall under the first type are quite straightforward; what is at issue is the violation of a clear rule or long-standing convention. However, in these instances, the fact that Twitter, or other social media, was involved is not the main focus of the incident; indeed, what occurred would be considered a breach of the standing orders or parliamentary conventions regardless. An example would be an MP tweeting about in camera proceedings during a committee meeting.

Revealing what was discussed during the in camera portion of a committee meeting is a clear breach of parliamentary rules, and possibly constitutes a contempt of parliament. The means by which the MP makes the privileged information public – whether

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Joanne McNair is a Table Research Clerk at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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this is done by tweeting proceedings, by speaking to journalists after the meeting, by emailing the information to other parties, or by making comments on the floor of the House – is secondary. The issue is making public the information discussed in camera. The fact that the violation involved Twitter (or other social media) is incidental.

In other instances, however, social media has been used to deliberately circumvent certain standing orders or parliamentary conventions. These incidents, which would include casting aspersions on the Speaker; making references to certain members being absent; accusing another member of lying or misleading the House, etc., are somewhat more complicated; they are further complicated by the issue of *where* the Member happened to be when the offending comment was made on social media – inside or outside of the Chamber, and *when* the comment was made – while the House was sitting, or after it had adjourned.

Most of the rulings made in respect to such incidents revolve around the convention that MPs cannot do indirectly what they cannot say or do directly. In other words, if what they said on social media would have been ruled out of order (or perhaps worse) in the Chamber during proceedings in Parliament, then the comments probably should not have been posted to social media. There are only a handful of recorded incidents of this nature, but the associated rulings have raised a number of issues which need to be considered:

1. Is a comment on social media sent from the floor of the House part of proceedings in Parliament?
2. Is a comment on social media sent from outside the Chamber, but while the House is sitting, part of proceedings in Parliament?
3. Should presiding officers treat comments made on social media, from inside or outside the Chamber, differently from comments made by MPs to journalists outside the chamber?
4. Should a Member be disciplined for comments made on social media which were clearly made outside of House sitting hours?

### Defining “Proceedings in Parliament”

“Proceedings in Parliament” has never been defined in Canadian or UK statute law. Section 16(2) of Australia’s *Parliamentary Privileges Act, 1987* defines it as:

all words spoken and acts done in the course of, or for purposes of or incidental to, the transacting of the business of a House or of a Committee, and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes—

- a) the giving of evidence before a House or a Committee, and evidence so given;
- b) the presentation or submission of a document to a House or a Committee;
- c) the preparation of a document for purposes of or incidental to the transacting of any such business; and
- d) the formulation, making or publication of a document, including a report, by or pursuant to an order of a House or a committee and the document so formulated, made or published.<sup>2</sup>

This definition, which predates not only the advent of social media, but of the internet in general, makes no specific reference to the location where the business of a House or Committee takes place. Deborah Palumbo and Charles Robert explain: “Generally, the phrase “proceeding in Parliament” has been considered a somewhat flexible concept, not strictly limited to proceedings that take place within the precincts of Parliament or to debates on the floor of the Chamber.”<sup>3</sup>

“Proceedings in Parliament,” therefore, include all of the formal business of a Parliament or its committees, including everything said or done by Members in the exercise of this business, and of their functions as Members. An exception to this definition, as explained in Maingot’s *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, is that some matters arising in the House are not necessarily proceedings in Parliament: “[A] casual conversation between two Members that takes place during the process of a debate is not a ‘proceeding in Parliament.’”<sup>4</sup>

This distinction is important when considering the use of social media by Members while in the Chamber. Unless what they post on Twitter or other social media is read out during debate, and thus part of the record of proceedings, it is difficult to conceive how one could argue that tweets sent from the floor of the House were part of proceedings in Parliament. And if they’re not proceedings in Parliament, should Speakers be expected to rule on matters arising from tweets made from the floor of the House?

### Speakers and Social Media: To Rule or Not to Rule

A general consensus is emerging that tweets or other social media comments sent from the floor of the House are not part of proceedings in Parliament and, for that reason, Speakers are limited in what they can do when such incidents are raised in the House.

Guidelines adopted by the UK House of Commons in October 2011 state that because presiding officers cannot police what MPs are saying on social media, the chair should not be expected to rule on any incident





**Is a comment on social media sent from the floor of the House part of the proceedings in Parliament? Rulings regarding the use of social media to deliberately circumvent standing orders or parliamentary conventions have raised such questions.**

that might arise from something said on social media by a Member from inside the chamber.<sup>5</sup> There haven't been any points of order or privilege involving social media raised in the UK House of Commons since the adoption of these guidelines.

On April 1, 2010, the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons ruled on a point of order concerning comments on the presence and absence of Members in the House posted on Twitter by an MP from inside the Chamber. Speaker Peter Milliken ruled that it is impossible for the Chair to police the use of personal digital devices by Members, and more importantly, that the Chair would not want to "change its longstanding practice of refraining from comment on statements made outside the House."<sup>6</sup> On September 5, 2012, a similar incident occurred in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, when an Opposition Member posted a photo of the largely empty Government front bench on Twitter. The Speaker reminded Members that the camera function should never be used in the Chamber.<sup>7</sup>

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales (Australia) delivered a statement to the Assembly regarding the use of mobile phones and social media on April 3, 2012. He stated unequivocally that "Members who choose to participate in such social engagement are reminded that tweets are not proceedings of parliament."<sup>8</sup>

Some rulings from other jurisdictions have been a bit more problematic. A question of privilege was raised in the Newfoundland House of Assembly on May 9, 2012 regarding a comment made on Twitter by one MHA, in which he accused another MHA of lying in the House during that day's debate. The tweet was posted after the House had adjourned for the day, and did not identify the MHA against whom he was making the accusation.

The Speaker's ruling was somewhat contradictory. He appeared to accept – or at least recognize – that comments made outside of the House were beyond the Speaker's power. Had an accusation of lying been

made in the House during debate, the Speaker would have immediately demanded that it be withdrawn. If a Member made such an accusation while outside the House – perhaps on an open line radio program – it would be regrettable, but there would be nothing the Speaker could do. However, the fact that the tweet was made after the House had adjourned seemed to be the only factor preventing the Speaker from acting: “had this accusation of lying been sent while the House was sitting so as to escape being sanctioned for unparliamentary language while still making the accusation, I believe it would be a *prima facie* case of privilege.”<sup>9</sup>

An incident in the Legislative Assembly of Victoria (Australia) raised a number of interesting questions.<sup>10</sup> After a Member tweeted allegedly disparaging comments about the Speaker of the Assembly, the Speaker demanded that the Member apologize for the comments. The Member asked the Speaker which tweets he was being asked to apologize for, but the Speaker refused to say in order to avoid having them read into the official record. Consequently, the Member refused to apologize and the Speaker threatened to expel him. Several Members intervened, pointing out the problems associated with the Speaker’s proposed course of action:

1. The potential precedent any action or ruling by the Speaker might create since the comment was made outside the Chamber, i.e. was not part of any proceedings of Parliament;
2. There aren’t any standing orders or Speakers’ rulings that would support a Speaker’s position or the position of any other Member offended by something said outside the House through the use of new technology. Forcing Members to apologize every time they offended another MP on Twitter would set a dangerous precedent;
3. There isn’t any avenue under standing orders enabling the Speaker to seek an apology. He could ask a Member to withdraw a comment made in the Chamber, but the comment in question was not made in the House;
4. Since the Speaker was unwilling to clarify what he was seeking an apology for, it would be a rather odd precedent to establish and the ramifications would go well beyond any insult or difficulty the Speaker had with the comment; and finally,
5. If the offending Member refuses to apologize for something he has not been alerted to since the Speaker won’t explain what he wants an apology for, what sanction should be applied?

The matter was referred to the Standing Orders Committee, which concluded in its report that “the relevant issue is conduct when using social media,

rather than the technology itself.”<sup>11</sup> The existing rules and practices of the Assembly were adequate to cover the use of social media and reflections on the Speaker, therefore the issue was one of promoting awareness and understanding of the rules, both among Members and the media. Its final recommendations were that the House reinforce the existing rules and practices by adopting the following guidelines developed by the Committee:

Members are reminded:

1. Any comments made on social media are not covered by parliamentary privilege.
2. Use of social media to reflect on the Office of Speaker or Deputy Speaker, aside from being disorderly under SO 118, may amount to a contempt.
3. Not to use social media to release confidential information about committee meetings or in camera hearings.<sup>12</sup>

### Social Media and Parliamentary Privilege

Social media presents a special challenge when it comes to parliamentary privilege. It can be used to breach an MP’s parliamentary privilege, and, perhaps more importantly, it presents a special challenge to MPs’ right to freedom of speech.

#### *Social media used to breach an MP’s parliamentary privilege*

As of this writing, there has been only one successful finding of a *prima facie* breach of privilege involving social media anywhere in the Commonwealth. On February 27, 2012, the Canadian Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Vic Toews, raised a matter of privilege alleging interference with his ability to discharge his responsibilities due to 1) a Twitter account which was used to reveal details of the minister’s private life; 2) his office being inundated with phone calls, faxes and emails; and 3) threats made against him in videos posted to YouTube by “Anonymous” – all in reaction to the Government’s introduction of Bill C-30 (*An Act to enact the Investigating and Preventing Criminal Electronic Communications Act and to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts*, aka the *Protecting Children from Internet Predators Act*).

The Speaker’s ruling, delivered on March 6, 2012, dismissed the first two points. It was only in the case of the video threats by “Anonymous” that the Speaker found the Minister’s privilege had been breached. Regarding the videos, Speaker Scheer stated:

I have carefully reviewed the online videos in which the language used does indeed constitute a direct threat to the Minister in particular, as well as all other Members. These threats



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demonstrate a flagrant disregard of our traditions and a subversive attack on the most fundamental privileges of this House.<sup>13</sup>

The matter was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for further investigation. The Committee's report, tabled on May 2, 2012, concluded that a breach of privilege had indeed occurred, but given the nature of "Anonymous", there was nothing the House or the Committee could do unless the identity of those involved became known.<sup>14</sup>

Social media can indeed be used to breach a Member's privilege; in that regard, it is no different from any other form of media or method of communication. The only obvious difference is that, given the often anonymous nature of social media, it might prove to be very difficult to identify who is behind the social media account used to threaten or otherwise interfere with the parliamentary duties of an MP. This was certainly the case with the videos uploaded to YouTube by "Anonymous". If it is impossible to identify those responsible for the acts, there is very little the House can do in response, other than condemn the action.

*Controversial/defamatory statements made in the House by MPs protected by parliamentary privilege transmitted on social media*

Parliamentary privilege and social media can conflict in a very different way. In this case, it isn't the Member's privileges which are breached; rather, Members use their privilege – some might say they abuse it – to make controversial comments in the House, knowing full well they are protected from charges of libel or other possible legal action, and this information is then quickly repeated by individuals on social media who are not protected by parliamentary privilege.

There have been two notable and contrasting examples of this in recent years. In September 2011, Australian Senator Nick Xenophon named a South Australian priest as an alleged sexual abuser.<sup>15</sup> Xenophon gave plenty of advance notice of his plans to out the priest, issuing ultimatums to the Church and giving the media constant updates. He then proceeded with his plan to name the priest under parliamentary privilege, despite repeated entreaties by the alleged victim to refrain from doing so.

Xenophon's speech in the Senate was broadcast live. As soon as the priest was named, the details and photograph of the individual were broadcast and printed online by virtually every news outlet. The laws concerning reporting of statements made under parliamentary privilege by the mainstream media are reasonably clear; they are protected from liability

for defamation where they report parliamentary proceedings fairly and accurately, what is known as "qualified privilege." The problem was that there was also an immediate response on social media. Those people tweeting and retweeting the name of the alleged abuser were not protected by qualified privilege, and it would have been quite reasonable for the accused to pursue legal action against them.

The second example occurred in the UK House of Commons. MP John Hemming sought to undermine the growing use of super- and hyper-injunctions in the UK by naming certain individuals who had sought out these highly secretive gagging orders. On March 10, 2011, Hemming used parliamentary privilege to reveal that the former chief executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland, who had become a focal point for anger over the 2008 financial crisis, had obtained a super-injunction banning the media from, among other things, identifying him as a banker.<sup>16</sup> Following Hemming's question in the House, the name of the banker and references to him being a banker soon began to trend on Twitter, as users of social media immediately jumped on the revelation. Each tweet was a violation of the super-injunction.

These two examples highlight the delicate balance that exists between a Member's right to freedom of speech and the necessity of exercising that right responsibly. This issue is not a new one; it has been raised many times, in many jurisdictions, long before the advent of social media. In 1987, Speaker John Allen Fraser told the Canadian House of Commons:

Such a privilege confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it. By that I mean specifically the Hon. Members of this place. The consequences of its abuse can be terrible. Innocent people could be slandered with no redress available to them. Reputations could be destroyed on the basis of false rumour. All Hon. Members are conscious of the care they must exercise in availing themselves of their absolute privilege of freedom of speech. That is why there are long-standing practices and traditions observed in this House to counter the potential for abuse.<sup>17</sup>

The UK House of Commons Procedure Committee of session 1988-89 wrote in its *First Report*:

However, privilege carries with it responsibilities as well as rights; and those responsibilities have to be exercised within the rules laid down by the House and in conformity with the standards it expects of its members. Irresponsible or reckless use of privilege can cause great harm to outside individuals who enjoy no legal redress and, in some circumstances, could be prejudicial to the national interest. The strongest safeguard against so-called abuses is the self-discipline of individual members.<sup>18</sup>

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A decade later, the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Privilege noted in its *First Report*:

The privilege of freedom of speech in Parliament places a corresponding duty on every member to use the freedom responsibly. The duty is all the greater now that the debates of the two Houses may be broadcast live anywhere in the world.<sup>19</sup>

The Committee rightly noted that making parliamentary proceedings much more widely available via television broadcast increased the need for MPs and Lords to exercise their freedom of speech more judiciously. The Committee was specifically concerned with the problem of matters currently before the courts, the application of the *sub judice* convention, and of matters of national security. Of course, in 1998-99, the internet was still in its infancy and social media such as Twitter did not exist. Whatever concerns the Committee may have had regarding how television broadcasts of parliament might magnify any potential abuse of freedom of speech by an MP, the reality is that this pales in comparison to the impact of social media.

While it is very difficult to come up with reliable viewership data for parliamentary broadcasts, what numbers are available indicate that these channels aren't widely watched by the general public. In the United Kingdom, for example, according to the Broadcasting Audience Research Board (BARB), the BBC's Parliament channel has an average weekly viewing per person (hours: minutes) of 0.01.<sup>20</sup> That translates to an average daily reach of about 165,000 people. It is fairly safe to assume as well that the bulk of that viewership tunes in for the weekly half-hour of Prime Minister's Questions. Numbers for CPAC, the Canadian Public Affairs Channel which carries live broadcasts of the House of Commons are more difficult to find. Numeris (formerly BBM Canada), which provides broadcast measurement and consumer behaviour data to broadcasters, advertisers and agencies, does not make the same level of statistical data available online as does BARB. However, in her paper, "Can Question Period be Reformed?" Frances Ryan notes that in 2005:

the Canadian Parliamentary Affairs Channel's (sic) viewership of Question Period during the Sponsorship Scandal, a time when Question Period was quite boisterous, dropped from 70,000 viewers a minute to 14,000 viewers per minute.<sup>21</sup>

Question Period is the most viewed part of the parliamentary day, and if it garners only 70,000 viewers per minute, then it is quite likely that the viewership for the rest of the parliamentary day is significantly lower. An MP misusing his or her freedom of speech during the course of normal debate (i.e. during a

proceeding other than Question Period) in the House might largely go unnoticed if this were limited to television viewership. Even the "traditional" media largely limit their coverage of the House to Question Period. However, today, it takes only one person to pick up on a controversial statement made in the House and rebroadcast it on social media. Within minutes, a tweet can propagate throughout the "Twittersphere", potentially reaching an audience far larger than that of the average parliamentary broadcast channel.

Senator Xenophon was widely denounced by his fellow Senators for misusing his parliamentary privilege. One Senator not only stressed that members of the Senate needed to exercise responsibility when availing themselves of their freedom of speech, but highlighted one other important consideration:

The rapid advances in technology mean that one statement like Senator Xenophon's is immediately broadcast through the social media. Within seconds of him naming that person last week, it was on Twitter. And, when news travels through Twitter, texting and 24-hour news channels, there is a responsibility for us to be aware of the potential damage a single statement can make.

Senator Xenophon wanted to speed up the church's investigations. Will his action necessarily have this intended consequence? Well, they are underway. But what about the dramatic unintended consequences? Who is taking responsibility for them? There is the damage to the priest's reputation, of course. Compare the lightning speed at which the allegations circulated with the snail's pace at which any possible response from the accused will take place—and the small number of recipients who will instantly be fed his side of the story. Frankly, is that justice?<sup>22</sup>

It is this new reality which prompted an editorial in the UK newspaper *The Guardian* calling for a new examination into parliamentary privilege:

When parliament last examined the question of privilege, the internet was still in its infancy. Social media were embryonic. And the ink on the *Human Rights Act* was barely dry. The possibility that parliamentary privilege might intersect with the online world and the role of the press in all its complexity was not even imagined. At the very least, a new select committee examination is now required. And so, are some clearer new responsibilities to go with MPs' ancient rights.<sup>23</sup>

There is no question that freedom of speech is the most important parliamentary privilege, and necessary to ensure a full and thorough debate in the House. However, given the realities of social media, the accepted tenet that members must not abuse this privilege is more important now than at any time

in the past. While parliamentarians such as Senator Xenophon or MP John Hemming won't have to worry about any legal action taken against them, members of the public who tweet or retweet potentially defamatory comments might well leave themselves open to possible legal action. Many, perhaps even most, might not understand the concept of parliamentary privilege, and assume that if it's "okay" for an MP to name someone as a pedophile or accuse them of some other grievous wrongdoing, then it's perfectly fine for them to repeat those accusations on Twitter or Facebook.

This is perhaps the biggest challenge social media presents to parliamentary privilege. No one would want to see MPs start self-censoring themselves, but parliaments may want to initiate studies into the issue of freedom of speech in the age of social media.

## Conclusion

Social media is, as the Legislative Assembly of Victoria Standing Orders Committee concluded, simply another form of communication. Therefore, it can impact, conflict with and challenge parliamentary conventions and rules in the same way as any other, more traditional form of communication. What sets social media apart, however, is its reach and, in the words of David Cameron, its "instantness."

In the past, if a politician said or did something controversial, that gaffe might have been picked up by the local media, and depending on the perceived seriousness of the incident or comment, it might also have eventually been picked up by national media. This has changed. Today, anyone with a social media account can instantly report something untoward done or said by an elected official, bypassing traditional media sources completely, and word of that incident can spread to every part of the globe which has internet access at a speed previously unknown.

The approaches taken by both the UK House of Commons and the Victoria Legislative Assembly seem to be the most sensible. Parliamentarians need to know that what they say on social media is not protected by parliamentary privilege, and that social media should not be used as a means to circumvent existing standing orders and parliamentary conventions. And perhaps more importantly, elected officials need to remember that when it comes to social media, the entire world is, in some way, watching.

## Notes

1 Christian O'Connell. Interview: "David Cameron on Twitter", YouTube video, 1:00, posted by AbsoluteRadio, July 29 2009. Despite his earlier misgivings, David Cameron finally did join Twitter in October 2012.

- 2 Commonwealth of Australia Consolidated Acts, *Parliamentary Privileges Act*, 1987, s.16(2).
- 3 Deborah Palumbo and Charles Robert, "Videoconferencing in the Parliamentary Setting," *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Vol. 22, no. 1, 1999, p. 19.
- 4 Joseph Maingot, Q.C., *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1997), p. 104.
- 5 United Kingdom, *House of Commons Debates*, October 13, 2011, column 555.
- 6 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, April 1, 2010, p. 1284.
- 7 Canada, *Ontario Legislative Assembly Debates*, September 5, 2012, p. 3361.
- 8 Australia, *Legislative Assembly of New South Wales Debates*, April 4, 2012, p. 10689.
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- 11 Australia, Legislative Assembly of Victoria, Standing Orders Committee, *Report into use of social media in the Legislative Assembly and reflections on the Office of Speaker*, December 2012, p. 3.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 13 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, March 6, 2012, pp. 5834-5.
- 14 Canada, House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, *Report 21 – Question of Privilege Relating to Threats to the Member from Provencher*, May 2, 2012.
- 15 Commonwealth of Australia, *Senate Debates*, September 13, 2011, pp. 5989-91.
- 16 United Kingdom, *House of Commons Debates*, March 10, 2011, col. 1069.
- 17 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, May 5, 1987, pp. 5765-6.
- 18 United Kingdom, House of Commons Select Committee on Procedure, *First Report* (1988-89), p. 290, as quoted in the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Privilege, *First Report* (1998-99).
- 19 United Kingdom Parliament, Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Privilege, *First Report* (1998-99).
- 20 Broadcasting Audience Research Board, data for the period of September-November 2012.
- 21 Frances Ryan, "Can Question Period be Reformed?," *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, vol. 32 no. 3, Autumn 2009, p. 18.
- 22 Commonwealth of Australia, *Senate Debates*, September 19, 2011, pp. 6458-6459.
- 23 "Editorial: Parliamentary privilege: Responsible behaviour", *The Guardian*, May 25, 2011.



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# Is Now the Time for Internet Voting?: BC's Independent Panel on Internet Voting

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Keith Archer

*British Columbia's Independent Panel on Internet Voting examined research exploring the merits and drawbacks of Internet voting. The author, who chaired of the panel, reports on its terms of reference, key evidence and its conclusions and recommendations. He notes that at the present time, the benefits of Internet voting are limited while the challenges of successfully implementing Internet voting are many and complex. The panel has recommended against universal Internet voting at the present time and suggested that if it is implemented it should be limited to people with specific accessibility challenges, co-ordinated province-wide, employ independent technical experts and be measured against the key principles established by the committee.*

Following an invitation of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, the Independent Panel on Internet Voting (the panel) was formed by the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia on August 9, 2012 to examine opportunities and challenges related to the potential implementation of Internet-based voting in provincial or local government elections in BC. The panel met between September 2012 and October 2013, reviewed the existing and evolving literature and spoke to a variety of experts in the fields of technology, Internet security and electoral administration. The panel examined research detailing both the benefits of and challenges to implementing Internet voting and heard from experts strongly in favour of and strongly opposed to the idea of implementing Internet voting in BC. The panel published a preliminary report in fall 2013 and a final report with recommendations to the Legislative Assembly in February 2014. This paper reviews the composition and terms of reference of the panel, reviews the key evidence it considered, and reports on its conclusions and recommendations.

## Context

Many jurisdictions in Canada and elsewhere have considered implementing Internet voting for public elections. Perhaps the most notable observation is not on how many jurisdictions have introduced and

continue to use Internet voting, but rather how few of them have done so. Notwithstanding the widespread adoption of various forms of information technology in many aspects of modern life, from banking to shopping to dating, there has been a relatively slow take-up in using the public Internet for public elections in most of the world's democracies. Proponents of Internet voting often point to cases in which Internet voting has been used in public elections as evidence that existing technology provides the requisite privacy and security provisions. Opponents of Internet voting, in contrast, often focus on the fundamentally different challenge provided by election administration in comparison with other aspects of technology's use, particularly the need to separate an individual's personal identity with their vote, as a principal reason that Internet voting does not provide the level of integrity that paper ballots do. The purpose of BC's Independent Panel on Internet Voting was to get beyond the rhetoric and examine the reality of Internet voting.

Three key developments led to the forming of the Independent Panel on Internet Voting. In March 2011, the City of Vancouver requested approval from the Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development to use Internet voting for the November 2011 Local Government Elections. Vancouver's elected officials and administration were aware that Internet voting was permitted in local elections both in Ontario and in Nova Scotia, and wished to have similar authority to use Internet voting in their jurisdiction. The request was not granted and the 2011 Local Government

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*Keith Archer is BC's Chief Electoral Officer.*



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Elections were held in the traditional manner. In August 2011, Elections BC submitted *Discussion Paper: Internet Voting* to the Legislative Assembly to further public dialogue on the topic, and in November 2011, the Chief Electoral Officer submitted the *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Recommendations for Legislative Change* to the Legislative Assembly. Of the four recommendations in the report, one entitled “Trialing New Voting Technologies” suggested that “legislators may wish to consider providing greater flexibility to the Chief Electoral Officer to introduce, on a pilot basis, a variety of new voting technologies.” This recommendation was intended to cover a host of technologies including, but not limited to, Internet voting and to increase the possibilities for further detailed assessment of new voting technologies in BC.

### **Forming/composition/process**

In August 2012, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General invited the Chief Electoral Officer to convene a non-partisan panel to review best practices with respect to Internet voting in other jurisdictions and to examine the issues associated with implementing Internet voting in BC. The request included that the panel examine Internet voting in both local and provincial contexts. The five panellists, selected by the Chief Electoral Officer, had lived and worked in BC and were selected based on their expertise and experience. Two were university professors with experience in computer science, computer engineering and computer and network security. One was a local government administrator with experience in elections, and one was a former Auditor General. The Chief Electoral Officer chaired the panel.

The panel reviewed some of the academic and practitioner literature on Internet voting, received presentations from experts on a variety of topics and reviewed the actual and perceived benefits and challenges to the implementation of Internet voting.

In fall 2013, the panel released a preliminary report that provided the public with a research summary of both the benefits and challenges to implementing Internet voting for provincial or local government elections in BC, and outlined the panel’s preliminary conclusions and recommendations. The preliminary report was available on the panel’s website and the panel invited public comment from BC residents for a six-week period concluding December 4, 2013.

During that period the panel received input from over 100 individuals from across BC. Of the comments in favour of Internet voting, common themes included: the potential for increased convenience and the removal

of barriers for people with accessibility challenges; the need for voting to keep up with an increasingly digital lifestyle; and anecdotal evidence that Internet voting would lead to increased voter turnout. Of the comments opposed to Internet voting, common themes included: concerns about Internet security generally and the potential for compromised election results because of security challenges; a lack of trust in results that aren’t scrutinized in the traditional manner; and a feeling that if Internet voting won’t improve voter turnout, it is not worth the risk.

In addition to comments from BC residents, the panel also received input from experts in the field of Internet security outside of BC, as well as from vendors of Internet voting technologies, and groups representing persons with disabilities in BC. Following a consideration of public input, the Report was finalized and submitted to the Legislative Assembly in February 2014.

### **Definition and Scope**

The panel limited the scope of its work to remote Internet voting. Accordingly, both on-site Internet voting and the use of electronic voting and counting machines in the voting place were out of scope. The panel also limited the scope of its research to the use of Internet voting in governmental elections.

### **Perceived and actual benefits of Internet voting**

A considerable part of the panel’s work involved reviewing evidence with respect to purported advantages and challenges of Internet voting. The material was gained through reviewing the vast literature on the topic of Internet voting, speaking with experts, receiving input from vendors, and examining circumstances for cases in which Internet voting either has been adopted and implemented or considered and rejected. This section briefly reviews some of the key evidence and arguments. Readers can refer to the panel’s full report for more details and additional purported benefits.

#### ***Increase voter turnout***

The last generation or two has witnessed a substantial decline in voter turnout in many jurisdictions. Research has shown that much of the drop in turnout is owing to the declining participation of young voters. Proponents of Internet voting often identify increasing youth voter turnout as a key reason for its adoption.

However, the evidence on this topic suggests otherwise. There is no consistent increase in voter turnout in jurisdictions that adopt Internet voting – in some it increases, in others it decreases, and in still

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others it is unchanged. Furthermore, the evidence shows that those who do vote online, when given the option to do so, are generally from the middle-aged or older demographic. In other words, Internet voting appeals to groups of voters who already have higher rates of participation. The evidence leads to the conclusion that the absence of Internet voting is not the cause of declining turnout and its availability is not the solution.

### ***Increase accessibility/convenience***

The argument that Internet voting is more convenient than traditional voting has been offered as another reason to adapt voting methods. However, the extent to which this is true varies by the circumstance of the voter. For out-of-province voters and voters with accessibility challenges, such as those with limited mobility or with other physical impairments, Internet voting may provide a significant benefit.

However, even for these voters, the level of convenience depends upon the security requirements in place to access the voting system. If it can be accessed readily by documents or passwords already held or known by the voter, then Internet voting may have a convenience advantage. If voters must register separately from voting, the complexities of the registration process may decrease this advantage. In any case, however, the panel concluded that the enhanced convenience of Internet voting for most voters is quite limited, and would not on its own justify adopting an Internet voting system.

### ***Cost savings***

Whereas increasing voter turnout is referred to by most proponents of Internet voting, saving money in administering elections is the other principal rationale. At present it is difficult to assess the degree to which an Internet-only vote would save money since most jurisdictions that have adopted Internet voting in Canada offer it only during advance voting, while traditional paper balloting is used on General Voting Day. When both voting methods are offered, it is often the case that Internet voting does not produce cost savings. Instead, it either adds costs, or requires fewer voting places on General Voting Day to keep costs neutral.

Taken together, evidence related to the purported advantages of Internet voting fail to provide a compelling case for its adoption. One might argue that in the absence of substantial risk associated with Internet voting, the rather modest advantages of Internet voting would still justify its use. However, the

risks inherent with Internet voting at present are both substantial and significant.

### **Perceived and actual challenges of implementing Internet voting**

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Perception of the challenges or risks of implementing Internet voting differs among stakeholders. Vendors claim that the challenges have largely been overcome and the risks are minimal, whereas most technical experts state that ongoing concerns related to security are still to be resolved.

The kinds of risks involved in Internet voting are largely different from the kinds of risks associated with traditional voting opportunities. The degree of risk and the consequences of those risks also differ and require assessment. While there are accepted standards for assessing safety-critical systems generally, to date there is no common methodology for measuring the risks associated with Internet voting. The following examines some of the key challenges reviewed by the panel.

#### ***Security***

Concerns about the security of Internet voting arise at three distinct points in the voting process. There are security risks at the voter's device, in the transmission of the vote from the voter's device to the election administration server, and in the server itself. Research has demonstrated that a significant number of personal computer devices are infected with malware, and it can be expected that the interest and activity in malware production will continue. Higher profile elections may be particularly attractive to those intent on subverting the democratic process by attacks on voters' computers. And yet, many election authorities that use Internet voting take no responsibility for ensuring the integrity of a voter's computer (or other device). This introduces an important risk to Internet voting.

The transmission of the vote over the public Internet to the election administration server is a second point of vulnerability and risk. A number of vendors use encryption of voted ballots to enhance security to this vulnerability. Although analysts often identify this as the strongest area of protection, recent revelations about widespread access to private materials and emails on the public Internet dampen confidence that this security is foolproof.

And third, there is the risk associated with the election administration server. Recent experience with the successful hacking of the election server in Washington D.C. by a professor and his students serves as a reminder of the myriad possible points of





Although Internet voting may be perceived as a way to increase voter turnout, increase accessibility and convenience of voting and save money, BC's Independent Panel on Internet Voting concluded the absence of Internet voting is not a reason for declining voting rates, increased accessibility and convenience would be tempered by registration complexities and Internet voting would actually be cost-neutral or increase expenses.

attack in the complex computer code of an Internet voting system. In short, the security challenges are substantial for Internet voting, and each jurisdiction must be wide-eyed in establishing its risk tolerance in adopting an Internet voting system.

#### *Transparency and auditability*

One of the major strengths of the paper-based voting system is the transparency of administration, and the auditability of results. If there is a close contest, the ballots can be recounted either by the election officials, or by a judge, or both. And, the casting and counting of ballots is done in a public space, with candidate and political party representatives able to observe the process. Voting is much less of a public exercise with Internet voting. It tends to occur in a private place, and can occur anywhere in the world for any given jurisdiction. Since there is often no paper trail associated with the vote, the audit function is performed very

differently – generally by technical experts examining computer code and processes, not political volunteers examining voters and election officials. The code used to operate Internet voting software is highly detailed and complex, and is generally not available for auditing purposes. Hence, transparency and auditability are fundamentally altered in an Internet voting environment.

#### *Cost*

Although reducing the cost of elections was listed in the section regarding the advantages of Internet voting, the discussion there indicated that cost savings are not inevitable with Internet voting, particularly when it is offered only during the advance voting period. The panel came to the conclusion that the costs of Internet voting are highly variable and depend upon the design features of the model used. These design features include: the auditing and public education components,

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the availability of authentication materials (that is, are the authentication documents and procedures tied to a general set of e-government services or are they unique to the voting experience), and other matters specific to each jurisdiction. In short, whereas costs savings may be realized in some implementation approaches, they are not present in all cases.

### **The panel's conclusions and recommendations**

The panel concluded that Internet voting has the potential to provide some benefits for administering local and provincial government elections in BC and that the most significant potential benefit of Internet voting is increased accessibility and convenience for BC voters. However, other presumed benefits, such as increased turnout and lower cost are not typically realized.

The panel also concluded that Internet voting has some significant inherent risks. It is important to understand that although the Internet is used for an increasing number of interactions (such as banking, shopping, dating, planning trips, and the like) with their own risks, voting over the Internet has a set of unique challenges that inevitably introduce a number of additional risks. The extent to which each of these risks can be mitigated or eliminated also depends on how an Internet voting model is implemented. Security at the voter's device, reduced transparency and auditability compared to traditional voting methods, and cost were seen by the panel to be the most significant challenges to implementing Internet voting for either local government or provincial government elections.

While Internet voting has been investigated by various jurisdictions around the world over the past 15 years, it is still not widely implemented. Internet voting is used in only a limited number of jurisdictions, and only on a limited basis. Since the submission of the panel's report to the Legislative Assembly, Norway has announced that it will not continue its trial of Internet voting due to concerns around security and a recognition that it did not lead to increased voter turnout.

Weighing the benefits and challenges to implementing Internet voting in specific circumstances is the role of policy-makers. There is a high level of trust in the current voting processes used at the local and provincial government levels, but there are opportunities for improvement in each. The panel believed that Internet voting has the potential to be an additional voting channel for voters with specific accessibility challenges in future local or

provincial government elections, provided that the recommendations outlined in its report are followed and any system implemented complies with the principles established by the panel. The panel believed it was not feasible for this to occur in time for the 2014 Local Government Elections.

To guide members of the Legislative Assembly, and potentially local government officials, in their task of weighing the benefits and risks of Internet voting, the panel set forth the following recommendations:

1. Do not implement universal Internet voting for either local government or provincial government elections at this time. However if Internet voting is implemented, it should be limited to those with specific accessibility challenges. If Internet voting is implemented on a limited basis, jurisdictions need to recognize that the risks to the accuracy of the voting results remain substantial.
2. Take a province-wide coordinated approach to Internet voting. If Internet voting is to be implemented at either the local government or provincial government level, election administrators should work with each other and with the provincial government to conduct a more rigorous review of the options, establish a common framework for implementation, and retain control and oversight over election administration during implementation.
3. Establish an independent technical committee to evaluate Internet voting systems and support jurisdictions that wish to implement approved systems. Provincial and local government election administrators do not have the necessary technical expertise in-house to properly evaluate, verify and test high security systems such as Internet voting systems. A technical committee independent from vendors, political parties, and elected representatives, reporting to the Chief Electoral Officer and made up of election administrators and recognized experts in Internet voting, cryptography, and computer security should be established to support the province-wide coordinated approach.
4. Evaluate any Internet voting system against the principles established by the panel. While acknowledging that there will be unique factors to consider in each jurisdiction, the panel recognizes the benefit of establishing a common, or at least similar, set of principles that can be used by multiple jurisdictions in Canada to evaluate Internet voting. These principles include: accessibility, ballot anonymity, individual and independent verifiability, non-reliance on the trustworthiness of the voter's device, one vote per voter, only count votes from eligible voters, process validation and transparency, service availability, and voter authentication and authorization. More details about these principles are available in the panel's report.





Paper ballots may be seen as old-fashioned, but the current system of voting in Canada is considered secure, transparent and auditable, and not unreasonably expensive.

## Conclusion

BC's Independent Panel on Internet Voting concluded that at present the benefits of Internet voting are very limited and the challenges to successfully implementing Internet voting are many and complex. The panel recommended that any implementation of Internet voting in BC should not be rushed and that a province-wide coordinated approach was the recommended strategy. This approach will ensure that local governments have the support required

when assessing the suitability of Internet voting for their jurisdiction. The panel also recommended an independent technical committee of experts should be recruited to guide the consideration, implementation, and evaluation of any system, and that such a committee evaluate potential systems against the principles identified by the panel. The panel's report and recommendations are before the Legislative Assembly.

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# The National Assembly of Québec in the Digital Era

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Catherine Grétras, Éliane de Nicolini and Noémie Cimon-Mattar

*Since the launch of its website in 1995, the National Assembly of Québec has been a leader in using online technology to reach out to citizens. In this article, the authors describe efforts to launch and accept online petitions, online comments and citizen consultation of proposed legislation, and the more recent growth of social media networking. They conclude by noting the special attention paid towards responsible social media use and how this new technology can bring about effective communication between the people and their government.*

To better inform citizens and increase their participation in the workings of their Parliament, the National Assembly of Québec launched its website in 1995. In 2010, the site was overhauled to enable Quebecers to participate more directly in the democratic process; in 2012 we went one step further when we chose to be present on social media. For years now, the National Assembly's use of technology has facilitated both parliamentary business and citizen involvement through online petitions, comments and consultations, not to mention our official Facebook page and Twitter account.

## Online Petitions Popular with Citizens

Since 2009, citizens have been able to express their views by signing petitions on the National Assembly website. Anyone seeking redress for a grievance can start an online petition, which can then be signed by others sharing the same concern and, ultimately, be tabled in the House by a Member. To be valid, however, an electronic petition must have been launched and signed on our website, which posts the number of people having signed in real time, but discloses no other information about them.

In 2013-2014, 100 e-petitions bearing more than 360,000 signatures were presented. By contrast, the 135 or so petitions presented that same year in paper form contained only about 180,350 signatures (See Table 1).

## Online Comments Facilitate Parliamentary Business

The National Assembly website also allows users to comment online on any bill or subject being studied in a parliamentary committee, even if the committee's mandate is not being submitted for public consultation. They simply choose the mandate or bill that interests them and complete a form online. The Members can read these comments on the Clerks' site, a virtual library of documents reserved for Members' use. This rapid access allows the Members to take citizens' concerns into better account. In 2013-2014 alone, 1,395 comments were received on 91 subjects or mandates.

## Online Consultations Foster Citizen Participation

Online consultations also reflect our use of technology to increase public participation and make it easier for Quebecers to express their concerns. As a complement to the more traditional forms of consultation, e-consultation allows people to give their opinions on a subject being studied by completing an online questionnaire. The responses are then forwarded to committee members to fuel their deliberations.

Our first online consultation was held in summer 2000 and many others followed. This consultation method was formally incorporated into the Standing Orders in the parliamentary reform of 2009. The online consultation by the Select Committee on Dying with Dignity prompted more public participation than any

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*Catherine Grétras is Committee Clerk and Coordinator of Parliamentary Proceedings. Parliamentary Proceedings Directorate at the National Assembly. Éliane de Nicolini and Noémie Cimon-Mattar are Communications Advisors for the National Assembly's Communications, Educational Programs and Visitor Services Directorate.*

other, with 6,779 people completing the questionnaire on the National Assembly website (*See Table 2*).

### Online Consultations Since 2009

By giving Members access to a great many responses to specific questions, online consultations enable them to “read” public opinion on certain issues. For their part, citizens are able to participate in mandates and express their viewpoints without having to travel or submit a brief.

means of communication. Besides confirming the usefulness of social media, the projects showed us how these platforms could be integrated into our communication strategies. The project teams were able to familiarize themselves with these new tools while honing their reflex to exercise caution. The projects highlighted the importance of implementing strict rules to protect the National Assembly on social media and prevent inappropriate behaviour by both Internet users and employees.

**Table 1. Petitions**

Fiscal year	No. of petitions tabled		No. of petitioners	
	Paper	Electronic	Paper	Electronic
2008-2009*	94	0	269,182	0
2009-2010	158	9	234,039	70,602
2010-2011	166	42	341,001	472,010
2011-2012	121	67	185,797	217,030
2012-2013*	109	59	191,502	197,816
2013-2014	135	100	180,351	360,121

*\*General election year*

### From Website to Social Media

In addition to supporting parliamentary business and citizen participation, the National Assembly website helps us disseminate information to specific groups and forge closer ties with them. Wishing to go further still, in 2009, a few months before launching our new website, we began to seriously consider using social media to reach out to Internet users and rouse their interest in the parliamentary and institutional information available on our website. Our website and social media are complementary-but-different means of providing the public with access to information. While information transmitted via social media sometimes tends towards the pedagogical and promotional, our website provides factual information on parliamentary and institutional news.

Although some Members were already active social media users, the Assembly decided to conduct three pilot projects, one on Facebook and two on Twitter, before opting for these new

### Facebook: Official and Specialized Channels

In November 2012, the National Assembly launched its official Facebook page to cover institutional and parliamentary news and give citizens the sense that their Parliament is accessible to them. We also wanted to create a “buzz” around the activities of Parliament and demystify the Members’ work. With Facebook, we can send messages to Internet users wherever they are. The website must be consulted, making it more static.

Our Facebook page contains information on parliamentary proceedings, institutional activities, events for the general public (exhibitions, conferences, brunches, etc.) and the National Assembly itself (schedules, services, historical information, etc.). We also use it to promote our website (news, useful sections, helpful hints, etc.), provide links to specialized Facebook pages and promote the Assembly’s information package in the social media.

Our official Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/AssnatQc](http://www.facebook.com/AssnatQc)) is intended for the general public, the media,

the Members and our political and administrative staff. By late September 2014, it had more than 4,000 “likes”.

Three related Facebook pages target more specific National Assembly audiences:

- Programme de stages – Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant ([www.facebook.com/FJCBstages](http://www.facebook.com/FJCBstages)) promotes the Assembly’s internship program and is for undergraduate and graduate students as well as former and current scholarship winners and parliamentary interns.
- Archives et histoire de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec ([www.facebook.com/ArchivesHistoireAssnatQc](http://www.facebook.com/ArchivesHistoireAssnatQc)) promotes the Assembly’s historical, archival and museum-related activities and targets history buffs, current and former Members and political and administrative staff.
- Espace jeunesse de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec ([www.facebook.com/EspaceJeunesseAssnatQc](http://www.facebook.com/EspaceJeunesseAssnatQc)), an educational space and source of information for young people and teachers, provides historical information related to Québec’s education programs and information for school groups. It is intended for young people and those working with them.

#### Twitter: Official and Specialized Accounts

Shortly after our Facebook page went online, the National Assembly opened a Twitter account targeting

essentially the same user groups and providing similar information to our Facebook page, but more concisely and directly. Promoting the Assembly’s information package in the social media, it provides links to our other Twitter accounts:

@BiblioAssnat (<https://twitter.com/BiblioAssnat>), which promotes our Library and the activities held there (new books, collections, conferences, etc.), is for members of the Press Gallery, Members of the National Assembly and those with a keen interest in history, politics and law.

@CommParlQc (<https://twitter.com/CommParlQc>), which keeps citizens informed of parliamentary committee work in real time, is intended for Members of the National Assembly, our political and administrative staff and those interested in parliamentary proceedings.

Twitter is an excellent tool for announcing publications, activities and opportunities for direct public participation. A natural complement to Facebook, it directs users toward dialogue platforms, encourages them to gain knowledge of, and become involved in, their Parliament and brings Parliament and the people closer together. By late September 2014, more than 2,900 Internet users were regularly reading our official Tweets (<https://twitter.com/AssnatQc>).

**Table 2. Online Consultation**

Mandates	No. of questionnaires received
General consultations on the draft bill entitled <i>An Act to amend the Civil Code and other legislative provisions as regards adoption and parental authority</i>	253
Order of initiative mandate on cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) in Québec lakes and rivers	85
Select Committee on Dying with Dignity	6,779
Special consultations on the document <i>Turning Equality in Law into Equality in Fact: Toward a Second Government Action Plan for Gender Equality</i>	99
General consultations on Québec Immigration Planning for the Period 2012-2015	88
General consultations on Bill 14, <i>An Act to amend the Charter of the French language, the Charter of human rights and freedoms and other legislative provisions</i>	4,334
Order of initiative mandate on the living conditions of adults staying in residential and long-term care centres	160



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The combined use of different social media platforms increases the chance that information will receive widespread attention. In late 2013, we increased our social media presence by creating our own YouTube channel. YouTube attracts 800 million individual users per month. With numbers like that, the visibility of the National Assembly and its audiovisual productions is likely to increase, facilitating Google referencing and use in social media.

### **Responsible Social Media Use**

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Shortly before launching its official Facebook page, the National Assembly issued a directive on social media use by its personnel to define the minimum requirements staff members must meet before using social media platforms in their work. The idea was to define employees' responsibilities in order to create a safe work environment that respects individual and collective rights. Given the confidentiality of a number of the Assembly's activities, another aim was to make employees aware of the consequences and risks inherent in social media use.

Based on these considerations, those wishing to subscribe to our social media accounts are encouraged to read the National Assembly's netiquette guidelines when they access our website's social media page.

### **Social Media Use by the Members**

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As an institution, the National Assembly uses social media to communicate with citizens, including young people. It is safe to say that the Members have followed suit. In mid-September 2014, social media use by our 124 Members (one seat vacant) was as follows:

Facebook: 120 Members (96.7%)

Twitter: 96 Members (77.4%)

Google+: 33 Members (26.6%)

YouTube: 38 Members (30.6%)

### **Increasingly Effective Communication**

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Over the past 20 years or so, the National Assembly has made ongoing efforts to adapt to new communication technologies in order to familiarize people—the general public and more specific groups—with our work and activities. We continue to establish closer ties with the public and find more ways of encouraging people's participation in democratic life. With such encouraging results, we have no intention of stopping now, and plan to continue maximizing our use of the Internet and social media platforms in the future.

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# Open Data's Potential for Political History

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Ian Milligan

*The recent trend of “open government” initiatives has provided an exciting new source of material for digital humanities researchers. Large datasets allow these scholars to engage in “distant reading” exercises to provide context in ways previously not possible. In this article, the author provides examples of the tools researchers can use to expand their understanding of the country’s political history and of the changing nature of parliamentary institutions and debates. He concludes with suggestions for ways to gain the maximum benefit from these data releases.*

What could we learn if we read every word of the federal Hansard and explored how the frequency of various ‘topics’ rose and fell over time? Or, what types of trends might we see if we were able to know the occupation of every candidate for office since 1867? What kind of heretofore unknown value can be discovered in these sorts of extremely large datasets? The answers to all of these questions are promising.

New and newly digitized datasets from parliamentary sources offer considerable potential for historians, political scientists, and other researchers interested in political history. The rise of digital humanities – a hard-to-define and nebulous grouping of humanities scholars who explore the possibilities offered by new media and emerging technologies and present fascinating methods to approach analyzing large quantities of information – as well as exciting releases in the ‘open data’ sphere, combine to offer new opportunities for understanding the past. In this piece, I highlight some of the possibilities that large datasets present to people interested in parliamentary history, and conclude with suggestions about what governments and funding agencies can do to support this emerging field of research.

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*Ian Milligan is an assistant professor of Canadian and digital history at the University of Waterloo, leading a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-funded exploration of how historians can meaningfully engage with and computationally explore web archives. He is also a founding co-editor of [ActiveHistory.ca](http://ActiveHistory.ca), a website dedicated to connecting the work of historians with the wider public.*

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## Open Government and the Digital Humanities

‘Open data’ is the idea that data should be made publicly available for use by anyone for any purpose, including reusing the data, modifying it, and building platforms upon it. ‘Open data’ is married to the concept of ‘open government’ – the idea that the people of a country should be able to access, read, and manipulate (in their own applications and on their own terms) the data that a country generates. The current federal government aggressively moved in this direction with the 2011 launch of the Open Government Initiative.<sup>1</sup> When people think of ‘open data,’ historical research probably does not immediately come to mind. In general, most open data releases tend towards the scientific, the technical, or the immediately applicable: bus route information, for example, or geospatial information about various zoning or infrastructure placements. However, some of these new data releases are increasingly relevant to historians, including the ones alluded to above – all candidates for federal political office, the frequency of words appearing in transcripts from parliamentary debates, etc.

Prior to the advent of these types of initiatives, many humanists would not be able to access these large arrays of information. The dawn of the era of the digital humanities has opened up new exciting possibilities for analysis, however. In English literature, for example, literary scholar Franco Moretti argues for “distant reading” to help understand the rise of the Victorian novel; rather than focusing efforts on a corpus of some two hundred or so books, we can use computational methods to study tens of thousands of novels at once.<sup>2</sup>

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While it is still important to read individual books to test theories and explore prose, we cannot read all of them; distant reading lets us further contextualize the ones that we do read.

Using a few parliamentary datasets as examples, let's see some of what a digital humanist can do with access to all of this data.

### Topic Modeling and Distantly Reading "Hansard," 1994-2012

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The federal government has made its full transcripts of debates since 1994 available online.<sup>3</sup> The transcripts form a relatively large, but not insurmountable, amount of full-text data: 800 megabytes of plain text. Yet it would be nearly impossible to read all of this text, especially if you wanted to be able to do anything else with your time!

We can, of course, query it with full-text searching. Many of us have been doing these types of searches for years, and to good effect in published scholarship on parliamentary history. But meaningful full-text searching is always difficult to carry out; a researcher must know what to look for with a fairly high degree of certainty. Using colloquial keywords, shorthand terms or perhaps being ignorant of a single typographical mistake, can lead to many missed results. Often a researcher would need to know a lot about a topic *before* hitting the search bar. More so, full-text searches in some search engines can skew results, given the algorithms that underlie the search function; results are being ranked in a way that most scholars do not understand.<sup>4</sup> If, however, a scholar is looking for specific discussions, whether it is a particular name of a labour strike or a specific piece of legislation, full-text search can be extremely useful. To try a full text search of Hansard, visit <http://www.parl.gc.ca/housechamberbusiness/ChamberHome.aspx> and click on "Search and Browse by Subject" in the left-hand column.

Researchers can repurpose the plain text used in subject searches to manipulate and explore these Hansard records themselves. One method that works particularly well with large corpuses is called topic modeling, a textual analysis methodology based on a mathematical concept known as Latent Dirichlet Allocation.<sup>5</sup> As Shawn Graham, Scott Weingart, and I wrote in the *Programming Historian*:

Topic modeling programs do not know anything about the meaning of the words in a text. Instead, they assume that any piece of text is composed (by an author) by selecting words from possible baskets of words where each basket corresponds to a topic. If that is true, then it becomes possible

to mathematically decompose a text into the probable baskets from whence the words first came. The tool goes through this process over and over again until it settles on the most likely distribution of words into baskets, which we call topics.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, imagine that you're writing a brief about the treatment of women workers. When writing sentences and paragraphs about labour unions, you tend to use words like "labour," "agreement," "certified," or "arbitration." When writing about women, you're likely to use words like "differential," "femininity," "inequality," and "maternity." Imagine that all those words are in little buckets sitting on your desk. By the end of your writing, the buckets are empty. Topic modeling tries to reverse that process: putting them back into the buckets from which they most likely came.

To demonstrate an example of topic modeling I downloaded all English language Hansard transcripts from 1994 onwards and tried to reconstruct them back into 'topics' within the text using Machine Learning for Language Toolkit, or MALLET. Anyone can try out this tool by following our tutorial at <http://programminghistorian.org/lessons/topic-modeling-and-mallet>. Once topics in this dataset were established, it was possible to measure how frequently they appeared in Hansard text throughout these years.

A quick note on how the results are displayed: First, the six graphs presented here use a varying y axis interval to show how frequently the topic appears in a given sitting of Parliament. I have elected to change the scale of the y axis for visibility purposes, so please note the values being used. Second, the words found in the resulting topics have not been translated. Using the French language plain text Hansards may result in slightly different topic results. Therefore, these graphs solely represent English language topics and the experiment should be conducted separately in French for accurate results.

I think that we can find provocative information with topic modeling. For example, one topic, that we might label "peace and peacekeeping," immediately appeared in MALLET's Hansard analysis (See Fig. 1). I was curious to see if establishing the frequency of this topic would allow me to test a hypothesis in the recent book *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*. Here, Ian McKay and Jamie Swift argue that the Canadian narrative of a peaceful, peacekeeping country is being replaced by the notion that Canada is a warrior nation focussed on military might. They suggest there is evidence of a shift from peace to war in our commemorative strategies, the decisions made

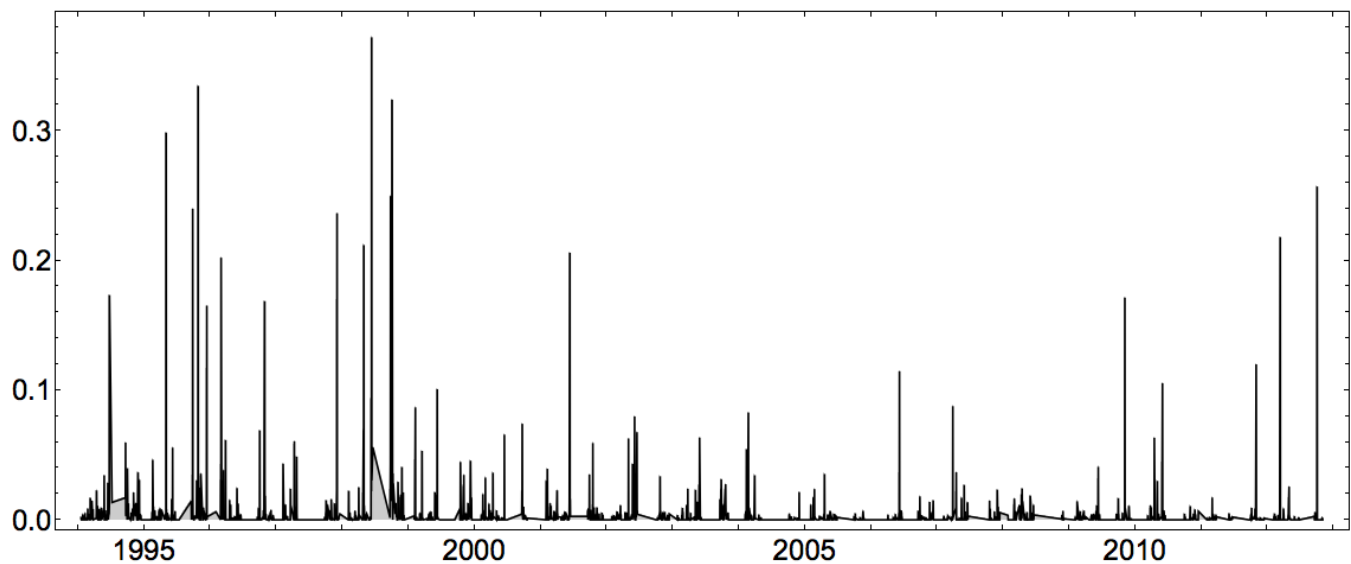


Fig. 1: A visualization of this topic's relative frequency across segments of Hansard. Topic keywords: "international canada peace mr nato war world peacekeeping conflict troops nations united people kosovo situation humanitarian foreign role genocide." Note that it is far more common before 2000 than afterwards (although perhaps we are more recently seeing a resurgence).

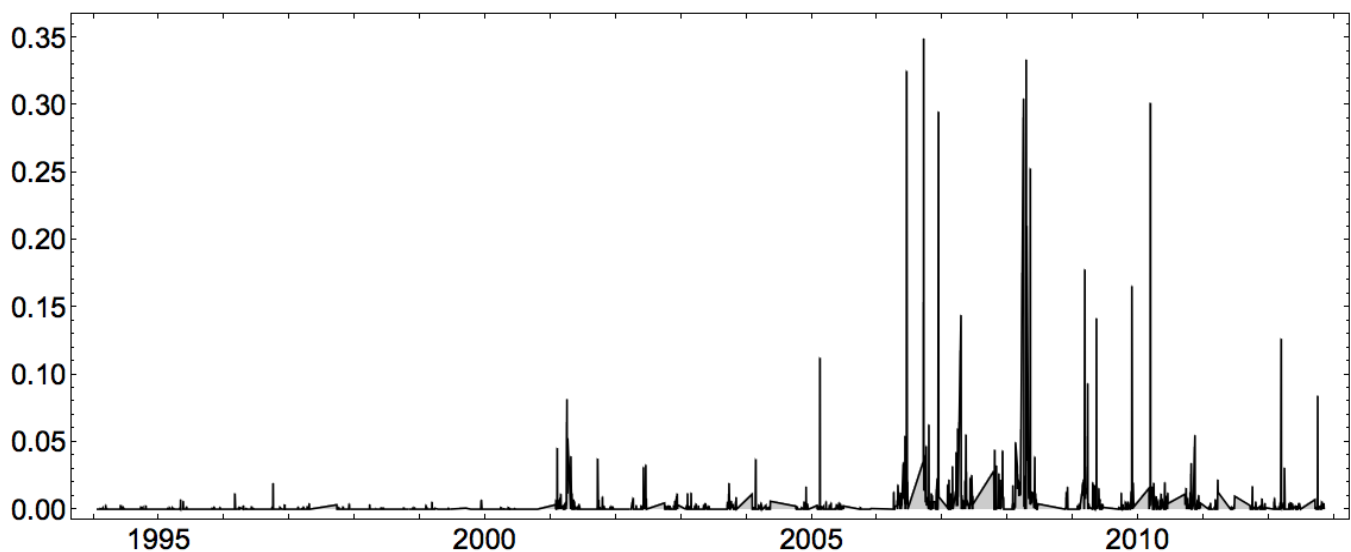


Fig. 2: A visualization of this topic's relative frequency. Topic keywords: "afghanistan mission canada canadian afghan mr minister government troops military security women defence forces international soldiers development motion support." Note again that it is more common after 2001, and notably after 2006. Comparing this to Fig. 1, we can see a transition between the two topics to some degree.

in the new citizenship guide for new Canadians, and several other facets of Canadian society.<sup>7</sup> A constant topic of discussion amongst historians at the Canadian Historical Association and in historical discussion venues such as *ActiveHistory.ca*, could we also see evidence to support this thesis in the Hansard dataset?

Keeping in mind that topic modeling tools automatically generate topics from these plain text datasets, and that we must put meaning to the word groups we find, I suggest the change in the topic's frequency from 1994 to present does accord with the *Warrior Nation* thesis. There is a noticeable drop off in this topic after the Conservative election in early



2006; however, the 9/11 attacks could also be seen as a significant fulcrum. We also do continue to see spikes. We don't know what these spikes mean at present, as they may be tied to random mentions of the Afghanistan mission or tied to specific events. More research is warranted. Another topic which appeared could also be relevant to read in tandem with this pattern (See Fig. 2).

Here, we see a topic directly related to the war in Afghanistan, albeit defence more generally, as well. The topic first appears briefly in the 1990s, but it accelerates in early 2001 with a news spike about the Taliban and then with the height of Canadian involvement in the Afghanistan war. If we take the two topics together, we can see how the first topic is more dominant near the beginning of the period under study while the second

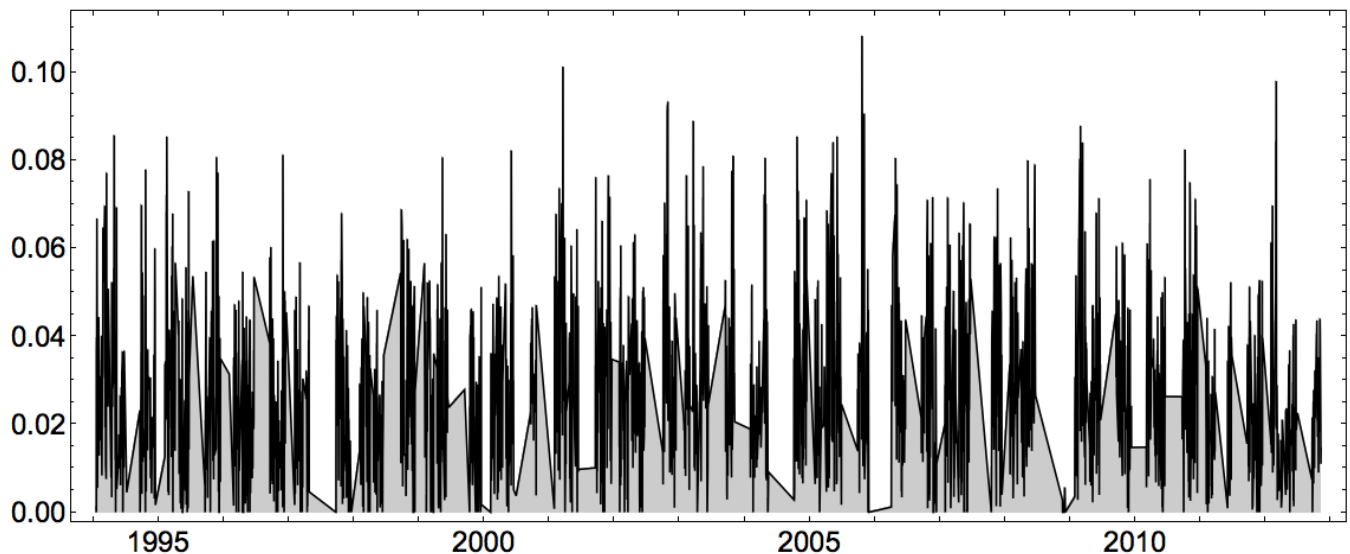


Fig. 3: This figure shows the general scaffolding of parliamentary business. Topic keywords: "committee mr report standing important parliamentary speaker work secretary process house issue recommendations review national made ensure information forward." Note that it is relatively consistent throughout, as should be expected.

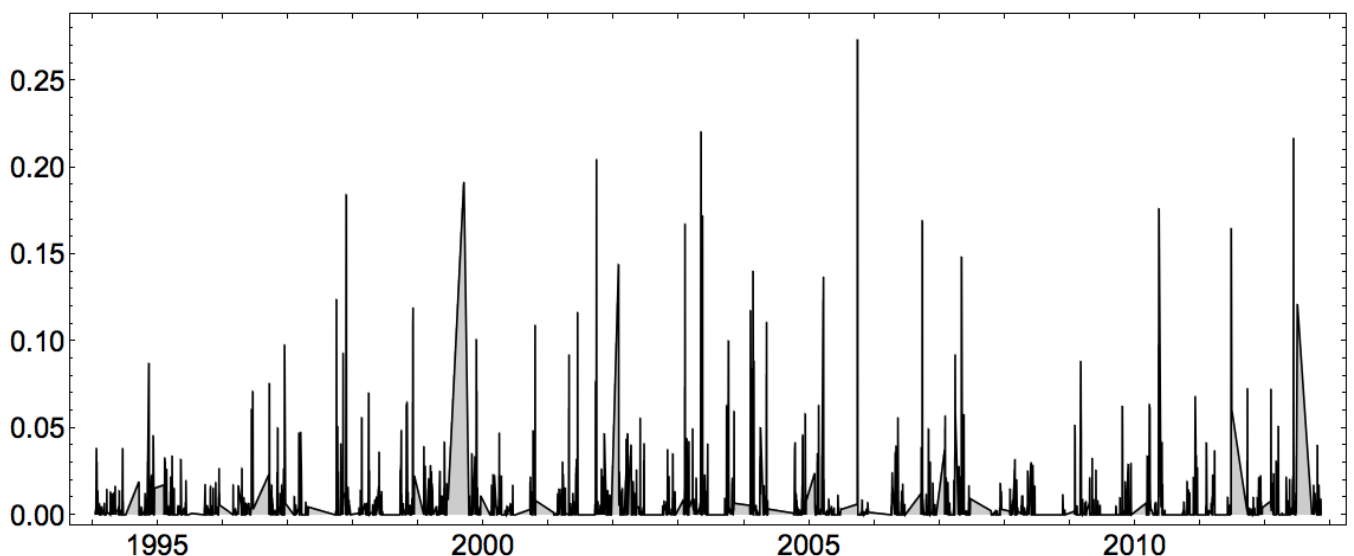


Fig. 4: A visualization of this topic's relative frequency. Topic keywords: "criminal code police sexual children offence mr law child person offences pornography justice dna age defence sex protect arrest." While there are ebbs and flows, it is relatively consistent.

topic is more dominant near the end. We certainly see a transition between the peace and peacekeeping topic and topic related to the military in Afghanistan; once again, this type of trend could potentially support the *Warrior Nation* thesis.

Other topics that appeared in the Hansard plain text modeling are also worth exploring. A topic

which includes words likely associated with routine parliamentary business is a constant (See Fig. 3). However, two topics (not pictured in graphs) that could be associated with budgets appear to identify shifting rhetoric. Here, a topic with general budgetary language noticeably declines after 2006. Another topic relating to Canada's newer economic action plan appears to replace it, especially by 2009. This topic's

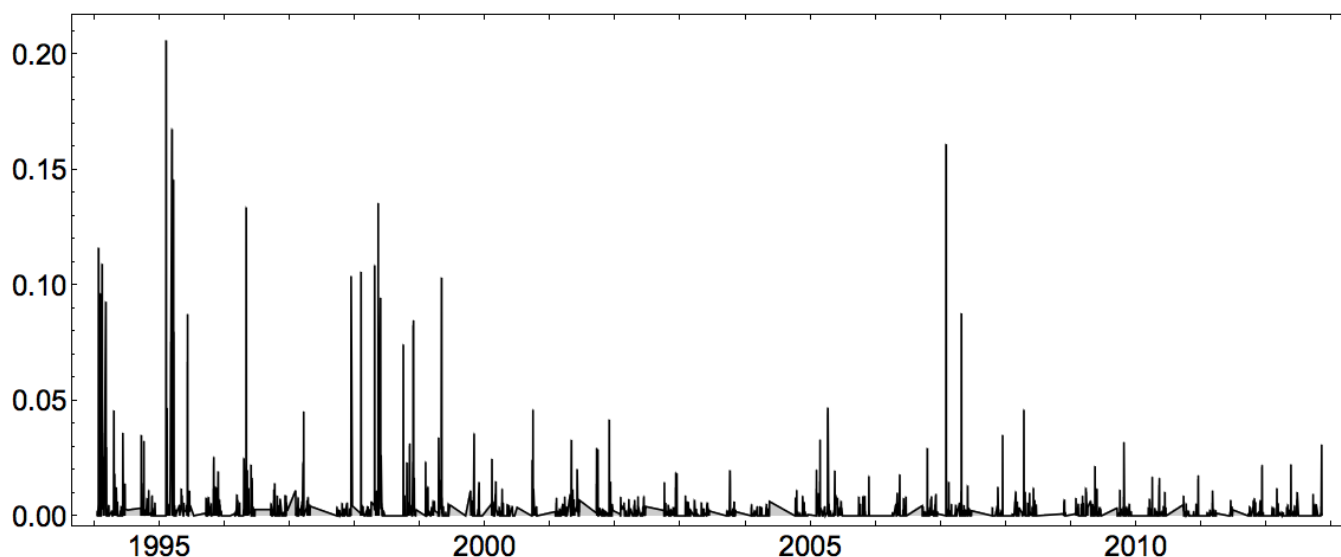


Fig. 5: A visualization of this topic's relative frequency. Topic keywords: "canadian cultural heritage canada culture flag canadians minister industry country mr arts national department world museums film artists quebec."

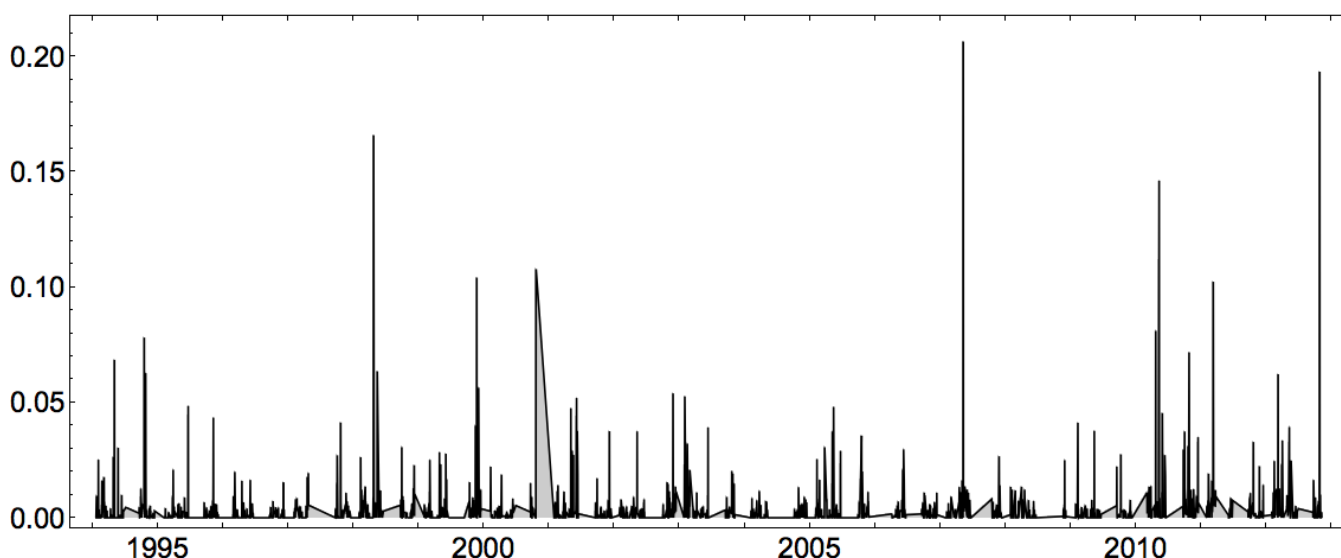


Fig. 6: A visualization of this topic's relative frequency. Topic keywords: "veterans war affairs canadian service mr benefits day world men services support speaker member country forces remembrance committee served." There are spikes around commemorative events, but it has more consistently accelerated since 2010.

keywords include: “economic budget jobs economy canada tax plan mr canadian canadians government measures action businesses support credit world finance crisis.”

A few other topics also appear notable. There is consistent concern within parliamentary debate about the protection of children, as seen in a topic which deals with youth and criminal offences (*See Fig. 4*)

A topic we might label “heritage” (*See Fig. 5*), seems to be on the decline, though we do see peaks around both the Quebec sovereignty referendum and during the ensuing *Clarity Act* debates. However, a potentially related topic concerning remembrance has seen some spikes in frequency since the beginning of 2010 (*See Fig. 6*).

Although these examples offer only a brief exploration of some possibilities, by employing these types of tools we can pull our gaze back from individual debates to consider overall debates patterns.

### Open Data and Parliamentary Candidate Occupations

Let’s examine another file: “History of the Federal Electoral Ridings, 1867-2010.” Available in both English and French at <http://data.gc.ca/data/en/dataset/ea8f2c37-90b6-4fee-857e-984d3060184e>, this large file contains information on 38,778 candidates for federal office in Canada. It comes in a 13-column comma-separated value (CSV) file with the following fields:

- Election Date, Election Type, Parliament, Province, Riding, Last Name, First Name, Gender, Occupation, Party, Votes, Votes (%), Elected.

The data in each field is then just a series of lines in text format; for example:

- 2008-10-14, Gen, 40, Quebec, PAPINEAU, Trudeau, Justin, M, teacher, Liberal, 17724, 41.47, 1.

We can move from left to right and gather the data: here we see current Liberal leader Justin Trudeau’s first election, in the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament, a general election, with 17,724 votes (41.47 per cent of the total vote count), and who was successfully elected (indicated by the value of ‘1’ in the elected column). CSV files are very useful to researchers because they can be read by multiple types of software: Microsoft Excel, a programming language, or Google Docs.

Using a programming language I was able to control for one or more of these data fields. One value in the occupation field that appeared to be that of ‘lawyer.’ When I pulled the most frequent occupations, here is what appeared:

**Table 1: Candidate Occupations**

lawyer	3730
farmer	2587
Null	2308
teacher	1415
merchant	1194
businessman	1125
physician	999
barrister	981
parliamentarian	816
student	795
journalist	497
retired	476
manufacturer	425
manager	355
Member of Parliament	351
administrator	298
accountant	271
consultant	267
contractor	267
notary	224
engineer	223
housewife	196
salesman	195
agent insurance	190
professor	184
secretary	179
editor	164
-at+barrister-law	163
educator	145
broker insurance	144

Note that the data is not perfect (it *never* is). 2,308 occupations were listed as 'Null,' which means there was nothing entered in the field. This deficiency mainly results from inconsistent or absent data entry about defeated candidates prior to the 14th Parliament. Nevertheless, we see some occupations we would expect to see: lawyers, farmers, teachers, merchants, businessmen, doctors, etc.

At a glance, we see another problem with this data: "merchant" and "businessman" might be considered part of the same category. Similarly, lawyers appear variously as "lawyers," "solicitors," "barristers," and even "-at+barrister-law." This lack of uniformity in data isn't abnormal, and decisions must be made at all stages about how to interpret it. People create the data, and people – historians or political scientists, for example – must then interpret it. We have to be very careful before taking such data at face value, especially as some re-elected MPs apparently just wrote 'Member of Parliament' or 'parliamentarian' whenever they were re-elected. All of these provisos help point us

towards the importance of actually looking at our data, rather than just trusting portals to do the work for us. We can use a program called Google Refine to clarify the data if we want to, or we can manually explore it. Data is not neutral, it's created by humans under subjective conditions.

Returning to "lawyers," how common is this occupation within the candidate pool? More so, do they have a disproportionate level of success at being elected? We know they were common as candidates in the 19th century and continue to be so today.

I generated two graphs, drawing on the 14th sitting of Parliament onwards (the point when data collection improved). Note that I did not control for by-elections within parliaments. Consider Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 (the x-axis refers to sittings of Parliament):

From this, we see that in the 14th Parliament nearly 11 per cent of all candidates for seats, whose occupations were listed, gave their occupation as lawyer (there were some solicitors too, but lawyer was overwhelmingly

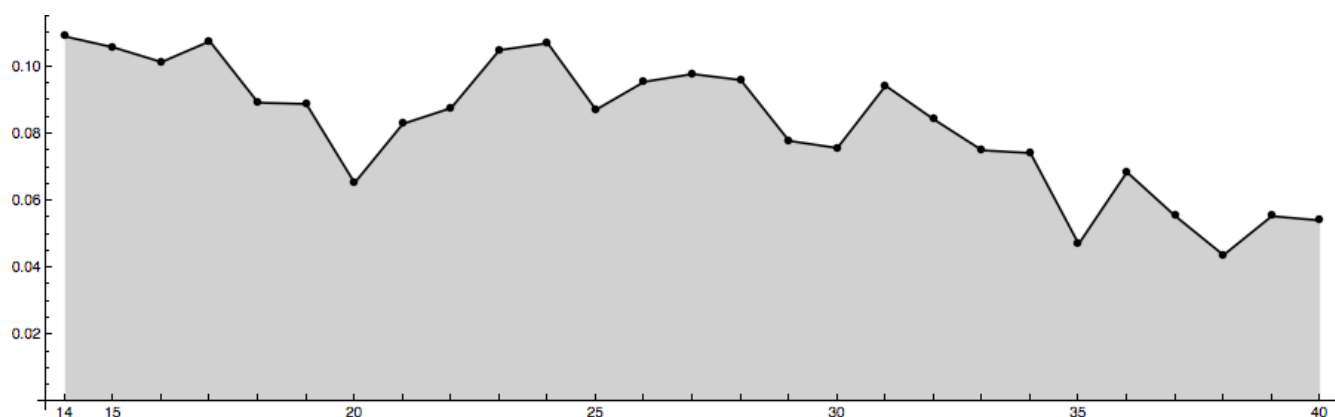


Fig. 7: Frequency of 'lawyer' occupation appearing in all candidates' occupation listing, 14<sup>th</sup>-40<sup>th</sup> Parliaments

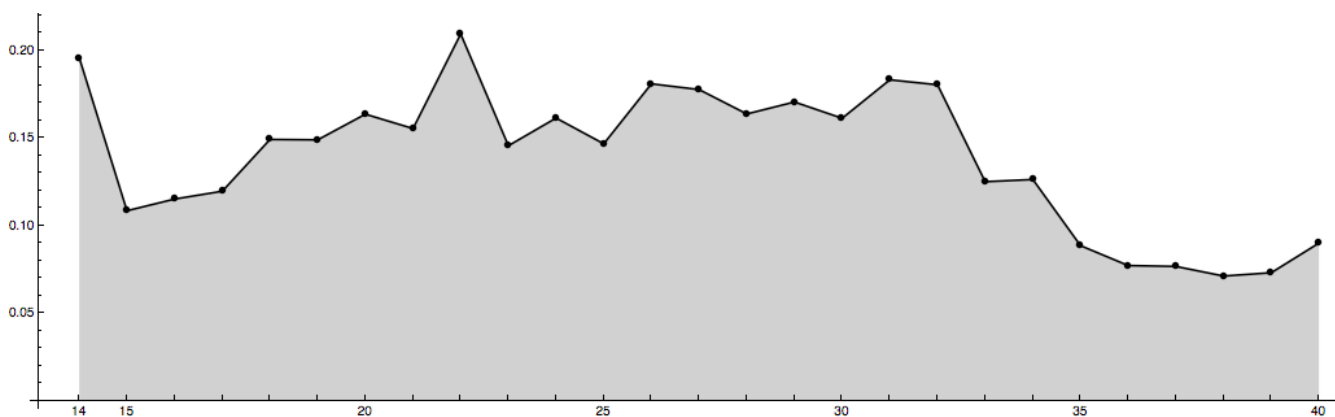


Fig. 8: Frequency of 'lawyer' occupation appearing as an elected candidate, 14<sup>th</sup>-40<sup>th</sup> Parliaments.



the way they recorded their occupation). Yet if we drop all the defeated candidates, we see that almost 20 per cent of the successful candidates during that Parliament were lawyers

There appears to have been a dramatic decline in the number of parliamentarians who are lawyers since that time – around nine per cent of our elected candidates in the 40th Parliament listed lawyer as their occupation. Though, of note, as discussed earlier – more lawyers may have listed their occupation as businessman, perhaps, or simply parliamentarian if they were seeking re-election.

Nevertheless, as imperfect as the data can be for exact statistics, it can be used to paint a general picture of candidate pools and the types of people who tended to run for various parties. For example, let's find the top 50 Liberal Party candidate occupations from 1962 onwards and compare to the New Democratic Party's candidates during the same period. I've chosen to use the Liberal and New Democratic parties due to their relatively consistent constitutions as the contemporary Conservative party has undergone several permutations during the same period of time. The resulting data speaks volumes about the make-up of the two parties:

**Table 2: Top 50 Occupations for Liberal Party Candidates from 1962 Onwards**

lawyer	737
parliamentarian	412
businessman	251
farmer	212
Member of Parliament	142
teacher	138
administrator	82
consultant	71
politician	68
physician	56
barrister	56
merchant	54
manager	53
economist	52
accountant chartered	49
accountant	44

journalist	43
professor	41
retired	38
engineer	37
manufacturer	36
businesswoman	31
broker insurance	31
educator	30
barrister and solicitor	29
business person	27
broadcaster	26
NULL	25
principal school	25
public servant	24
agent insurance	22
director executive	21
cabinet minister	21
publisher	20
notary	19
contractor	19
consultant management	18
housewife	17
engineer professional	16
-at+barrister-law	16
mayor	16
executive	15
business executive	14
doctor medical	13
student	13
social worker	12
clergyman	12
veterinarian	11
realtor	11
manager sales	11

**Table 3: Top 50 Occupations for New Democratic Party Candidates From 1962 Onwards**

teacher	484
student	192
lawyer	179
farmer	150
professor	71
retired	70
representative union	69
social worker	52
parliamentarian	51
Member of Parliament	48
journalist	43
businessman	43
administrator	38
consultant	37
professor university	37
housewife	36
electrician	34
economist	33
NULL	32
secretary	31
educator	31
representative	31
physician	29
clergyman	29
high school teacher	27
salesman	27
researcher	25
school teacher	23
writer	22
manager	22
-employed+self	20
minister	19
organizer	18
steelworker	18

machinist	17
business manager	17
agent business	16
trade unionist	16
engineer	16
clerk	16
accountant	14
contractor	14
college instructor	13
assistant executive	13
instructor	13
director executive	12
unemployed	12
nurse	12
driver truck	12
sociologist	12

Although I am not a scholar of parliamentary politics, in just a few minutes of tinkering I have already begun to generate good, meaningful data about the composition of our federal parliaments and the candidates who stand for election within them. I present this data warts and all because it shows, once again, that data should be taken with a grain of salt: this data, for example, treats “high school teachers” and “school teachers” differently. That might help one researcher, but might hinder many others.

Beyond parliamentary records, many other datasets may be of interest to various researchers, including birth registrations, most popular baby names, marriage registrations in various cities and towns, names of soldiers who enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and so on. The opportunities for study are nearly limitless.

### What Should We Do With This Data?

Datasets hold great potential for transforming research practices, but the full value of these rich information sources has not yet been realized. Academics should consider the following points before engaging in work with datasets.

First, it can be difficult to do interdisciplinary work in Canada. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada decided this year to discontinue the use of ‘priority areas’. Grant applications dealing

with digital applications would previously have gone to a specific 'digital economy' committee, whereas now disciplinary peers review them. The jury is out on whether this change will be positive or negative, but the transformative use of new media and emerging technologies strikes me as something that should be reviewed by committees closely related to the subjects. Some traditional academics embrace technology while others quite openly shun it. More problematically, digital projects tend to involve interdisciplinary teams: from English scholars who have embraced distant reading, to computer scientists who understand the nuts and bolts of algorithms far better than humanists can. Historians generally operate on a sole-author, lone practitioner model, which means that we sometimes have trouble evaluating the work of large team-based projects. We need to keep an eye on institutional barriers to digital adoption, particularly as they have implications for hiring, tenure and promotion within the academy.

Our granting councils are one area where governments can support and help to shape the form of research to come. Academics should take the lead on research, in keeping with dictates of academic freedom and abstract exploration, but we operate within structures set up by governments.

We should also encourage the release of more data, and realize that when data is being made available it needs to be machine-readable (for example, as plain text files, or formatted comma-separated value sheets). We can create complicated Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), which are layers to put atop of a dataset to let computers talk to each other, but often just letting scholars *download* the data themselves is ideal (privacy concerns being respected, of course). If datasets are created, I'd love it if people always thought "could we let anybody download this?" And if so, why not put a big red button at the top saying "export data"? A scholar can dream.

Finally, I think it's important to note that that this type of work is going to accelerate in the future. My current primary research project examines how historians will be able to use web archives, and I firmly believe that a history of the 1990s or 2000s cannot be researched and written *without* using web archives. Not everyone will write histories of the web, but what happens on the web is an invaluable part of the historical record. Scholars studying a more recent election, must concern themselves with posts on message boards, electoral websites, tweets, videos, and so forth. These are all part of the record.

The 1990s are now distant history; students who will begin to write our histories of that period are probably just now entering the post-secondary sector. Will they be able to use web archives? More importantly, will they be able to use web archives through computational methods? We cannot read every website, after all – if we thought there were too many Victorian novels, just imagine how many tweets there are on a single day. We need to lay the groundwork of digital literacy for our next generation.

The data is there. We now need a trained generation of humanists who ask interesting questions and can manipulate data to help bring Canada's humanities scholarship into the 21st century. As historians increasingly turn to online sources like the *Programming Historian*, begin to blog and engage with data, the shape of our profession will begin to shift accordingly. Hopefully, governments will continue to support digital humanities research by making datasets available in a way that will maximize their utility to present and future scholars.

## Notes

- 1 See: *Implementation of Canada's Action Plan on Open Government (Year-1) Self-Assessment Report*. <http://open.canada.ca/en/implementation-canadas-action-plan-open-government-year-1-self-assessment-report>.
- 2 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*, Verso, New York, 2007).
- 3 See: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/housechamberbusiness/ChamberSittings.aspx>.
- 4 When other historians tell me that they are not digital historians, I often ask them if they use Google to help with their research - and if so, if they know how PageRank works. For more on this, see Ted Underwood, "Theorizing Research Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago," *Representations* 127, no. 1 (August 2014): 64–72, doi:10.1525/rep.2014.127.1.64.
- 5 The concept is described in David M. Blei, Andrew Y. Ng, and Michael I. Jordan, "Latent Dirichlet Allocation," *Journal of Machine Learning Research* 3 (2003): 993–1022. An extremely good explanation can also be found in Matthew L. Jockers, "The LDA Buffet Is Now Open; Or, Latent Dirichlet Allocation for English Majors," *Matthew L. Jockers Blog*, September 29, 2011, <http://www.matthewjockers.net/2011/09/29/the-lda-buffet-is-now-open-or-latent-dirichlet-allocation-for-english-majors/>.
- 6 Shawn Graham, Scott Weingart, and Ian Milligan, "Getting Started with Topic Modeling and MALLET," *Programming Historian*, September 2, 2012, <http://programminghistorian.org/lessons/topic-modeling-and-mallet>.
- 7 Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012).



# CPA Activities: The Canadian Scene

## New Speaker in New Brunswick

**Chris Collins**, Liberal MLA for Moncton Centre, was elected Speaker of the New Brunswick Legislature on October 24. Collins replaces retiring Progressive Conservative MLA **Dale Graham**. Prior to coming to the Assembly via a 2007 by-election, Collins had been a member of Moncton city council. He was re-elected to the Legislature in 2010, when he served as the opposition critic for Education, Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour, Environment, Energy, and Justice. Outside of politics, Collins has been an advocate for families with sick children. In 2013, Collins, whose son Sean passed away from cancer at the age of 13 in 2007, cycled across Canada raising \$100,000 for children with cancer.

Telling MLAs that he was “honoured and deeply humbled” to be elected Speaker, Collins promised to his best “to uphold the traditions of this office and the good functioning of this chamber” over the coming sessions.



**Speaker Chris Collins**

## 36th Canadian Regional Seminar

From October 16-19, Halifax’s Delta Barrington hosted the CPA’s annual Canadian Regional Seminar. Over the course of five business sessions and three networking sessions, delegates from across the country discussed aspects of parliamentary procedure and professional development.

In a session chaired by Ontario MPP **Rick Nicholls** on October 17, Saskatchewan Speaker **Dan D’Autremont**, Newfoundland and Labrador Speaker **Wade Verge** and Nova Scotia Speaker **Kevin Murphy** discussed the ever increasing administrative roles of the parliamentary speaker. **Donald Naulls**, an associate professor in Saint Mary’s University’s Political Science Department outlined the role of Canadian assemblies in modern government in a session chaired by Nova Scotia MLA **Terry Farrell**. MP **Joe Preston** addressed recent House of Commons procedural reforms in a business session chaired by Alberta MLA **Genia Leskiw**.

On October 18, in a session chaired by Quebec MNA **Gerry Sklavounos**, Saskatchewan MLA **John Nilson** and Quebec MNA **Sylvain Gaudreault** discussed aspects of ongoing professional development for parliamentarians. A final session, chaired by PEI MLA **Sonny Gallant**, and featuring presentations by Mr. Sklavounos and Halifax Immigration lawyer **Elizabeth Wozniak**, focused on

the integration of immigrants into Canadian society. Following this presentation, delegates were invited to visit the nearby Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. One million immigrants, refugees, war brides, evacuee children and displaced persons came through this gateway to Canada from 1928 to 1971.

## CPA Secretary-General

**William Shija**, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, passed away on October 4, on the eve of the 60th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

A former Minister and Member of Parliament in Tanzania, Dr. Shija became the first black African Secretary-General in the Association’s history when assumed the office on January 1, 2007. He is survived by his wife **Getruda Peter Shija** and five children. Dr. Shija’s passing was a shock to many and a particular blow to the staff at CPA HQ who owe so much to him.



**Dr. William Shija**



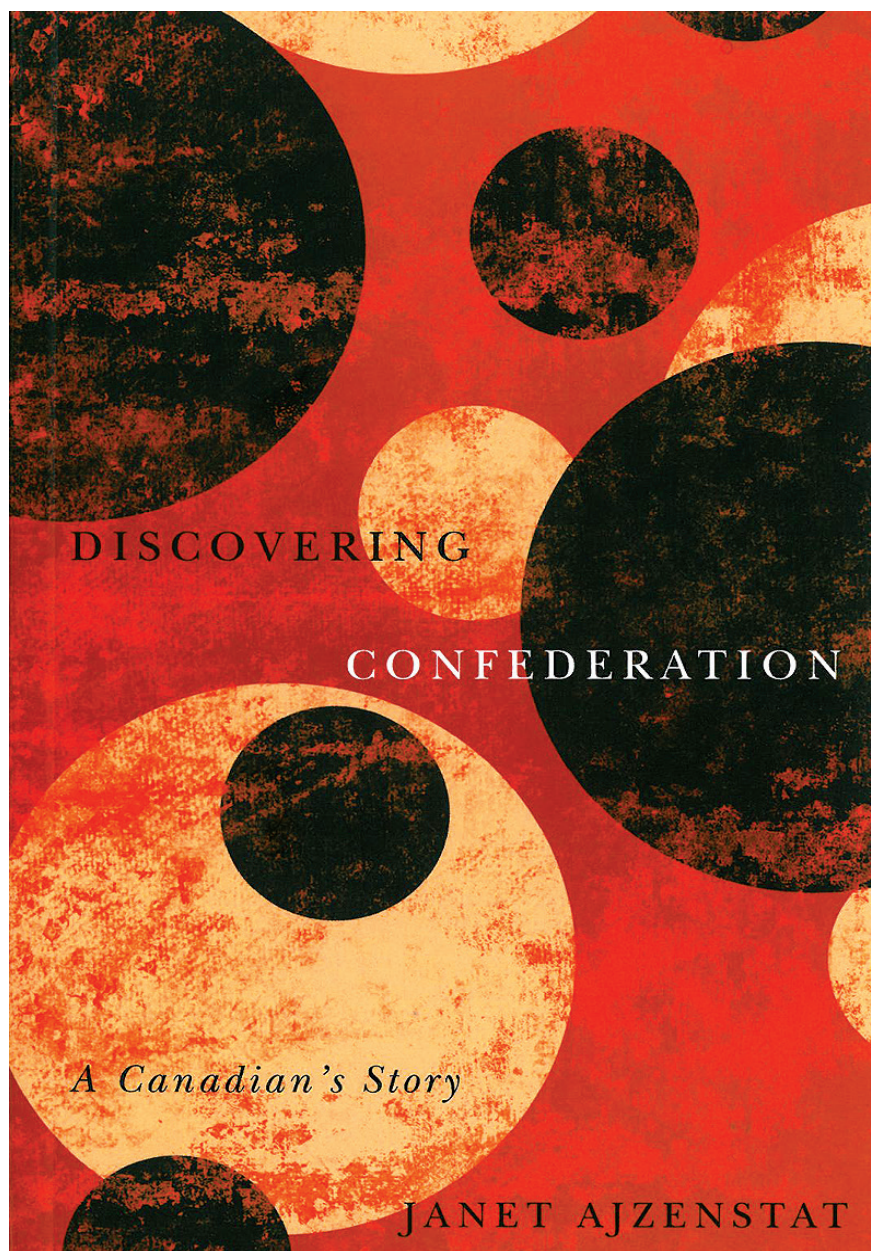


## Parliamentary Book Shelf

**Discovering Confederation:  
A Canadian's Story** by Janet  
Ajzenstat, McGill-Queen's  
University Press, Montreal &  
Kingston, 158p.

Janet Ajzenstat tells us that her mentor at the University of Toronto, Allen Bloom, once advised her to take up a great book and read it sympathetically – make the best case you can for your author, he exhorted. It is easy to read this book – a welcome intellectual biography by Canada's leading authority of its political origins – sympathetically. Indeed, there is much to admire in this glimpse at a political philosopher who came to appreciate the 1867 Canadian constitution and its version of parliamentary democracy.

Beginning with her graduate studies at McMaster at age 36, under the influence of George Grant and his *Lament for a Nation* (whose nineteenth century collectivism she later rejects), and then moving to the University of Toronto for doctoral work under Blooms' tutelage (he would later author the academic bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*), Ajzenstat attends to the rough outlines of her scholarly career. Serendipitously, it seems, Ajzenstat took up Lord Durham's Report of 1849 as her great text. Her dissertation and the resulting publication (*The Political Thought of Lord Durham*) remain the best introduction to Durham's political philosophy.



Moving to Philadelphia after her marriage to the late Samuel Ajzenstat, she joined the anti-war movement and other socialist causes before heading

to McMaster University where her beloved Sam secured a job in the philosophy department. Starting her academic career late, and with two children at home,

Ajzenstat began seeking academic positions wherever she could find them. Initially denied a post at McMaster, she taught at Calgary and then Brock, before finally returning to McMaster with a faculty position in hand at age 57. With mandatory retirement in place, she had eight years of full-time teaching left to her.

These outlines serve as backdrop against which the ideas in this little book flow. *Discovering Confederation* is all about ideas. Her preoccupation with Lord Durham and liberal constitutionalist Pierre Bédard, and her interest in Confederation and Canadian constitutional reform have been about unearthing the liberal foundations of the Canadian political project as a framework for debate among political ideologies.

She repudiates the Hartz-Horowitz thesis: that Canada was founded by American loyalists who were in pursuit of a conservative collectivism that later enabled a socialist left to emerge as a viable political option. This “revisionist” account ignores the study of our “institutional foundations” and merely provides cover for Canadian nationalist and anti-American sentiment, she maintains. Ajzenstat insists, therefore, that we first “read the documents.” We will then hear what the framers thought and believed.

She subsequently read the Confederation debates, not only in the Parliament of Canada but also in other provinces, with her co-editors William Gairdner, Ian Gentles and Paul Romney resulting in the publication of the encyclopedic *Canada’s Founding Debates*. In the course of this exercise, she finds “no trace”

of the “heirarchy, deference and communalism” associated with the Hartz-Horowitz thesis. Instead, she and her co-editors discover a sophisticated liberal constitutionalism that is informed by John Locke and by understandings of popular sovereignty (more fully elaborated in her 2007 book *The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament*). This is not a history bereft of ideas, as leading Canadian historians have proclaimed, but a record brimming full of them.

Having allied herself with conservative political thinkers and having rejected trendy culturalist accounts of Canada’s origins, it would appear that Ajzenstat’s sentiments lie firmly on the right side of the political spectrum. She hints otherwise in her book. After having embraced anti-war socialism in her youth, she admits to having “shed some” of those values – only some of them, she provocatively hints. She chooses not to let us in on the details.

Instead, she stresses her preferred understanding of liberal constitutionalism: as one of “unconstrained” deliberation. Constitutionalism is not about entrenching the policy preferences of a fleeting majority – a constitution of “partial interests ... not legitimately foundational” – but about facilitating reasonable disagreement on pressing matters of public policy. Parliament, from this angle, amounts to an “endlessly contested meeting” in which there is no “permanent agenda.” There are no perpetual winners or losers; rather, political

victory remains a possibility for all political forces. Parliamentary democracy thereby is open to all political ideologies and possibilities.

This openness is one of the great merits of democratic practice, observed de Tocqueville in the nineteenth century. It is tumultuous – an “agitation, constantly reborn” – with a capacity to repair its mistakes. Ajzenstat leaves us with an appealing account of Canadian parliamentary democracy, one that many Canadians will readily want to sign on to.

**David Schneiderman**

Faculty of Law and Political Science  
University of Toronto







# Legislative Reports

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## Alberta

### Prorogation of the 2nd Session of the 28th Legislature

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In a departure from the practice of proroguing on the day prior to the commencement of a new session, the 2nd Session of the 28th Legislature was prorogued on September 18, 2014, and a Proclamation was issued for the commencement of a new session on November 17, 2014. Prorogation in Alberta has not lasted for more than one day since March of 1984.

### Leadership Contests

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On September 6, 2014, the Progressive Conservative (PC) Association of Alberta held its leadership vote. Although technical glitches and access challenges with the online voting system used by the PC Party were reported, the majority victory for **Jim Prentice** (former Member of Parliament for Calgary North Centre), with over 75 per cent of the vote, went unchallenged by the other leadership contenders,

**Ric McIver** (Calgary-Hays) and **Thomas Lukaszuk** (Edmonton-Castle Downs). Although not elected to the Legislative Assembly at the time, as the leader of the governing party in the province, Mr. Prentice was sworn in as Alberta's 16th Premier on September 15, 2014.

On October 18, 2014, the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP) leadership race saw over 3,500 votes cast to select the 8th leader of the party. Having received approximately 70 per cent of the votes cast, **Rachel Notley** (Edmonton-Strathcona) won a majority over competitors **David Eggen** (Edmonton-Calder) and **Rod Loyola**. Ms. Notley's father, **Grant Notley**, was a former MLA and also the leader of the Alberta NDP from 1968 until his death in a plane crash in 1984.

### Changes to Cabinet

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On September 15, 2014, Premier Prentice announced his Cabinet. In addition to reducing the size of Cabinet, the Premier appointed unelected individuals to lead two government ministries. **Stephen Mandel** (former Mayor of Edmonton) became the Minister of Health and **Gordon Dirks** (former MLA for Regina Rosemont, Saskatchewan, and former Chair of the Calgary Board of Education) was appointed the Minister of Education.

In addition to being President of Executive Council,

Premier Prentice holds both the Aboriginal Relations and the International and Intergovernmental Relations portfolios. **Robin Campbell** (West Yellowhead), previously the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, was appointed the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. **Diana McQueen** (Drayton Valley-Devon) moved from Energy to Municipal Affairs, while **Frank Oberle** (Peace River) went from Aboriginal Relations to Energy, and **Manmeet Bhullar** (Calgary-Greenway) moved from Human Services to Infrastructure. Other ministers changing portfolios include **Heather Klimchuk** (Edmonton-Glenora), going from Culture to Human Services and **Jeff Johnson** (Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater) leaving Education to take on the Seniors' portfolio. **Kyle Fawcett** (Calgary-Klein) changed ministries to Environment and Sustainable Resource Development leaving a vacancy in the Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour portfolio, to which the Premier appointed fellow leadership contestant **Ric McIver**.

Ministers maintaining their previous portfolios include **Verlyn Olson** (Wetaskiwin-Camrose) with Agriculture and Rural Development, **Jonathan Denis** (Calgary-Acadia) as Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and **Wayne Drysdale** (Grande Prairie-Wapiti) with Transportation. Private Members **Maureen Kubinec**

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(Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock) and **Stephen Khan** (St. Albert) were appointed to Cabinet, in the Culture and Tourism and the Service Alberta portfolios, respectively. **Don Scott** (Fort McMurray-Conklin), a former Associate Minister, will now lead the Ministry of Innovation and Advanced Education. Three associate ministers are also included in the new Cabinet, with **Teresa Woo-Paw** (Calgary-Northern Hills) responsible for Asia Pacific Relations, **Naresh Bhardwaj** (Edmonton-Ellerslie) continuing in his role for Persons with Disabilities, and **David Dorward** (Edmonton-Gold Bar) assigned to Aboriginal Relations.

#### October 2014 By-Elections

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Vacancies were created in the Assembly resulting from the resignation of four Members, including two former Premiers. On August 6, 2014, **Alison Redford** announced her immediate resignation as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, leaving a vacancy in the constituency of Calgary-Elbow. Then on September 12, 2014, outgoing Premier **Dave Hancock** (Edmonton-Whitemud) announced he would be retiring as Premier and as an MLA. His resignation became effective September 25, 2014. The next day another member of the government caucus, **Ken Hughes** (Calgary-West), resigned from the Legislative Assembly. Three days later, Independent Member **Len Webber** (Calgary-Foothills), formerly a member of the government caucus, resigned. Mr. Webber will be running in the next national election representing the federal Conservative party in the Calgary-Confederation constituency.

Four by-elections were held in Alberta on October 27, 2014, three of which were contested by the unelected members of Cabinet. With a voter turnout of approximately 40 per cent, the governing PCs won in all four electoral districts. Premier Prentice won with a majority in Calgary-Foothills, Mr. Mandel won Edmonton-Whitemud by a large margin of approximately 40 per cent of the vote, while Mr. Dirks (Calgary-Elbow) and Calgary police officer **Mike Ellis** (Calgary-West) each won their respective constituencies by smaller margins of fewer than 800 and 400 votes respectively.

#### Caucus Change

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After citing concerns about the party's leadership and resigning from both Cabinet and the PC caucus in March, **Donna Kennedy-Glans** (Calgary-Varsity) rejoined the PC caucus on September 17, 2014.

#### Investigation into Government Use of Aircraft and Government Offices

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On August 7, 2014, the Auditor General of Alberta released the results of his investigation into the Government's use of aircraft including the Government's fleet of airplanes. The investigation was initiated in March of 2014 at the request of then-Premier Redford.

The Auditor General's report indicated the former Premier had derived a personal benefit on several occasions by bringing her daughter with her on government aircraft flights and that instances had been found in which false passengers were booked on government flights to ensure the Premier and her entourage would travel alone. The report also identified times in which

former Premier Redford used government aircraft for partisan or personal travel. Ultimately the report concluded that in 2012 the government fleet travel cost \$3.9 million more than what the travel would have cost if driving and comparable commercial air travel alternatives had been used.

In addition to evaluating the use of government aircraft, the Auditor General's report also confirmed information on plans to construct a personal apartment for the Premier and her daughter. Often referred to as the "Sky Palace", the suite was to be built on the Legislature grounds in the building that is currently undergoing renovations to supply offices and other facilities to MLAs, their support staff as well as some government staff.

#### Committee Activity

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On August 5, 2014, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship released its report on Bill 201, *Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014*, which was filed with the Assembly as an intersessional deposit. The report recommends against the Bill receiving second reading but also suggests that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development consider a review of the *Agricultural Pests Act* as it pertains to *Fusarium graminearum* (FHB). Due to prorogation, the Bill has been removed from the Order Paper.

The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future continued working on its review of Bill 9, *Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014*, and Bill 10, *Employment Pension (Private Sector) Plans Amendment Act, 2014*. In addition to the stakeholder presentations and public meetings held in the spring, the Committee



also received over 450 written submissions from members of the public, unions, and other organizations. Following prorogation, work on the review ceased on September 18. The government has announced it will not reintroduce either of the Bills in the next session.

During the spring sitting the Assembly passed the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Amendment Act, 2014*, which repealed the publication ban regarding the identity of children who die while receiving provincial intervention services and requires that any related regulations being made under the Act be considered by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly. Following a request from the Minister of Human Services, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities met on July 16, 2014 and initiated a review of a draft *Publication Ban (Court Applications and Orders) Regulation*. Over the summer the Committee received 12 written submissions from identified stakeholders. On September 11, 2014, the Committee received a technical briefing from the Ministry and then passed a motion expressing its approval of the draft regulation. It is anticipated that the Committee will table its report upon the commencement of the Third Session of the 28th Legislature.

The *Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act* authorizes the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund to meet during a period of prorogation. It is the only legislative committee in Alberta that is able to do so. The Committee hosted its annual public meeting on October 9, 2014. In order to encourage a younger demographic to

participate, the meeting was held on the University of Alberta campus with an afternoon start time. In addition, the meeting featured a special presentation on sovereign wealth funds from **Randall Morck**, a professor with the School of Business at the University of Alberta. Interested members of the public were encouraged to submit their comments and questions about the Fund to the Committee in person, by phone, or online via email or Twitter. A live broadcast of the meeting was also available online and on television, with the television broadcast being repeated later the same evening. It is estimated that the two televised broadcasts attracted over 1,000 viewers in Edmonton and Calgary.

**Jody Rempel**  
Committee Clerk



## Nova Scotia

### Fall sitting 2014

The 1st session of the 62nd General Assembly prorogued on September 25, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. The 2nd Session commenced at 2:00 p.m. the same day with the reading of the Speech from the Throne by the Lieutenant-Governor.

Bill # 1 was introduced on Monday September 29. The bill

provides for the continuation of Halifax's IWK Health Centre as a separate entity and the collapsing of all other existing health authorities into one provincial health authority. The contentious portions of the bill that caused much debate in the House of Assembly were labour provisions regarding employees affected by the merger.

Second reading debate commenced at 7:00 a.m. on September 30, and the second reading vote took place at approximately 5:20 p.m. that evening. The Bill was then referred to the Law Amendments Committee for public representations. The sitting on October 1 took place from 8 p.m. to midnight. As a result, the late sitting time allowed the Chair of the Law Amendments Committee to report Bill # 1 back to the House as all public presentations were then concluded. The business of the House concluded at 11:39 p.m. that day and, following a 22-minute recess, the House reconvened at 12:01 a.m. October 2. Following Question Period the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole on Bills at 1:11 a.m. to consider Bill # 1. The bill was reported back to the House at 3:07 a.m. and the House rose shortly thereafter. On October 3, a resolution was presented to direct Bill # 1 back to the Committee of the Whole on Bills for a 30-minute time limit to permit the making of certain amendments. Upon the Bill being reported back to the House from the Committee of the Whole on Bills, unanimous consent was obtained to proceed with third reading of the bill. Third reading of the bill passed at approximately 1:20 p.m.

Security was greatly increased at the House of Assembly

during the debate on this bill as protesters were ever-present. Video of protesters blocking the Premier's vehicle as he attempted to leave the premises made the national news.

On September 26, the Government House Leader tabled a resolution amending the Rules of the House of Assembly. The Opposition parties did not consent to the amendments and after moving the resolution for debate October 10 lengthy debate commenced. The House sat from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on October 14 and from 12:00 p.m. to 6:44 p.m. on October 15 at which time the Resolution as amended was passed and the Government House Leader advised the House the effective date of the changes would be October 27.

The major changes to the Rules are:

- The House no longer sits on Mondays. The new sitting hours are 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays.
- Question Period takes place on each sitting day and lasts 50 minutes. Question Period is fixed to commence one hour after the start of the Daily Routine. The first question put by each leader of a recognized party will have two supplemental questions – only one supplemental will be permitted for all other questions.
- Adjournment debate take place on Wednesday weekly rather than three days per week.
- Notices of Motion which are read in the House have been reduced to a total of four per day.
- Statements by Members have been added to the Daily Routine. Each Member may make two one-minute statements.

To date 64 Bills have been introduced in the House – 24 Government, 37 Private Member's and 3 Private and Local. Bill # 1 received Royal Assent.

### Association Meetings

The Nova Scotia Table was delighted to host the Association of Clerks at-the-Table's Professional Development Seminar in Halifax from July 28 to August 1, 2014. Fifty-four delegates, 29 accompanying persons and 15 youth attended for a total participation of 98 persons. Thirteen of the 14 Canadian jurisdictions participated in the seminar and all 13 either chaired or were presenters at the business sessions. The delegates participated in eight informative interactive business sessions and time was set aside in the program for an open session for updates and comments by our guest associations/parliaments and our honourary members. The delegates from the House of Lords and the House of Commons in the United Kingdom presented the seventh business session.

From October 16 to 18, 2014, the Nova Scotia House of Assembly hosted the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's 36th Canadian Regional Seminar. Thirty-nine delegates and nine accompanying persons attended. The delegates participated in five business sessions that led to many questions and interesting exchanges.

**Annette M. Boucher**

Assistant Clerk



## British Columbia

### Speech from the Throne

On October 6, 2014, Lieutenant Governor **Judith Guichon** prorogued the second session of the 40th Parliament. That afternoon, she opened the third session with the Speech from the Throne.

The Throne Speech outlined government's approach for development of a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry. The Speech noted that, as a means of securing the Province's economic growth, a legislative framework for LNG would be introduced to provide certainty for businesses and fairness for British Columbians in terms of revenue collection. The nascent LNG industry was compared to earlier development of the forestry sector. The government's approach for LNG is designed to benefit BC's economy and people, while ensuring the protection of the environment.

In their response to the Throne Speech, official opposition members noted the government's plan for LNG development reflected a change to the extent of expected LNG development from commitments made in previous Throne Speeches. Opposition members also stated that earlier Throne Speeches had forecast significantly higher levels of

debt reduction and job creation as well as the establishment of a Prosperity Fund. Opposition members expressed concern about the need for additional measures to strengthen job creation.

## Legislation

In the fall sitting, the following noteworthy bills had been introduced at the time of writing:

- Bill 2, *Greenhouse Gas Industrial Reporting and Control Act*, would repeal and replace the *Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Cap and Trade) Act* with a regulatory scheme to limit greenhouse gas emissions by industrial operations.
- Bill 5, *Container Trucking Act*, would authorize the appointment of the British Columbia Container Trucking Commissioner and the commissioner's powers, duties and functions – the commissioner would assume responsibility for all truck licensing to provide stability to Port Metro Vancouver following a series of labour disruptions, including a strike earlier this year.
- Bill 6, *Liquefied Natural Gas Income Tax Act*, proposes a taxation framework beginning on or after January 1, 2017 on income derived from liquefaction activities carried out at an LNG facility.

## Committee Activity

This reporting period saw a record number of British Columbia parliamentary committees undertaking public consultations:

- The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services concluded its annual pre-budget consultations on October 17, 2014. The Committee received 1,821 submissions, in the form of online survey responses, written and video submissions, and presentations at 20 public hearings. The Committee is

required to release its report by November 15, 2014.

- The Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth received 160 submissions and heard from youth and advocates as part of its special project examining youth mental health in BC. The Committee also continued with its responsibilities for reviewing the reports of the Representative for Children and Youth.
- The Special Committee to Review the *Personal Information Protection Act* completed the consultation stage of its statutory review of the *Act* on October 31, 2014.
- The Select Standing Committee on Health continued its consultation on health care sustainability, which includes an online process for receiving written submissions from stakeholders and interested British Columbians. The Committee extended the deadline for receiving written submissions to December 31, 2014.
- The Special Committee to Review the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) continued its review of the IIO's administration and general operations, with a series of meetings with stakeholders as well as an online process for written submissions which continued until October 29, 2014.
- The Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts met for two days in September and October to consider seven reports from the Office of the Auditor General.

On October 9, 2014, the Legislative Assembly established a Special Committee on Local Elections Expense Limits. The Committee launched the first phase of its mandate, which requires a report to the Assembly by November 27, 2014 on principles for the relationship between elector organizations and their endorsed candidates

with respect to expense limits, and principles for establishing limits for third party advertisers. In 2015, the Committee will begin the second phase of its mandate, on expense limit amounts for candidates for mayor and council, electoral area director, school trustee, special purpose local governments, and third party advertisers, with a report to the Assembly due by June 12, 2015. Local elections on November 15, 2014 will be held under existing statutory provisions, including new local elections legislation adopted in May 2014, which reformed campaign disclosure statements, advertising sponsorship disclosure and registration, and the compliance and enforcement duties of Elections BC. The Committee's recommendations will inform the development of amendments to the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* that would implement expense limits for local elections in 2018.

## Sessional Order

On October 9, 2014, the House adopted on division a sessional order to amend Standing Orders 25 and 47(a) to reschedule Oral Question Period and daily Members' Statements to mornings on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each sitting week. Oral Question Period and Members' Statements will remain scheduled in the afternoon on Mondays and Wednesdays. A similar sessional order was adopted for the first time on February 13, 2014, in the previous session.

## Apology to Tsilhqot'in Nation for Historical Wrongs

On October 23, 2014, Premier **Christy Clark** made a ministerial statement regarding reconciliation with Tsilhqot'in Nation, expressing government's



apology for the “wrongful arrest, trial and hanging” of six First Nations chiefs. The chiefs had been engaged in a territorial dispute to defend their lands and their peoples 150 years ago. Official Opposition leader **John Horgan** supported the apology, and expressed hope that it would lead to “a genuine start to reconciliation with the Tsilhqot’in people.”

**Gordon Robinson**  
Committee Researcher



## Manitoba

### Standing Committees

Manitoba Standing Committees held several intersessional meetings during this period.

- The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met on three separate occasions to consider several chapters of the last two *Auditor General Reports – Annual Reports to the Legislature*, and the last three years of the Public Accounts.
- The Standing Committee on Crown Corporations met four times to consider annual reports from Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Public Insurance, The Workers Compensation Board, and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation.
- The Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development met to hear public presentations and

conduct clause-by-clause consideration of three Bills that the House had not completed last spring. The following Bills will accordingly be reported to the House in the upcoming fourth session for the remaining stages of the bill enactment process:

- Bill 69 – *The Technical Safety Act*
- Bill 70 – *The Real Estate Services Act*
- Bill 71 – *The Animal Diseases Amendment Act*

### Members Not Seeking Re-election

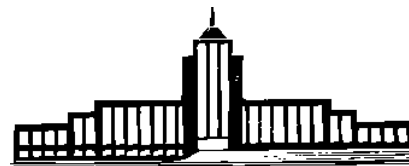
Several long-serving members of the Manitoba Assembly have recently announced that they will not run again in the next election. **Leanne Rowat**, MLA for Riding Mountain, will not stand for re-election after over a decade of service. Mrs. Rowat served as critic in a number of areas, most recently Children and Youth Opportunities. During her time as an MLA, Mrs. Rowat introduced several Private Members Bills, including three pieces of legislation which received royal assent: *The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act*, *The Neurofibromatosis Awareness Month Act*, and *The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day Act*.

This past June, **Stu Briese**, MLA for Agassiz, also announced that he will not run in the next election. First elected to the House in 2007, Mr. Briese previously worked in municipal politics, including time as a member of the board and President of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and the Association of Manitoban Municipalities.

Another longtime MLA not seeking re-election is **Bonnie Mitchelson**, who has been a Member of the Legislature for almost three decades, having

been first elected in 1986. Mrs. Mitchelson represented the urban riding of River East for her entire tenure as an MLA. She served for several years as a minister in the Gary Filmon Progressive Conservative (PC) government with responsibilities for such portfolios as: Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Status of Women, the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation, and Family Services (serving six years as Minister). Following the PC Party defeat in 1999 she was chosen as interim leader in May 2000, holding that position until a new leader was acclaimed later that year. When she steps down prior to the next election, Mrs. Mitchelson will be the longest serving female MLA in the history of the province.

**Andrea Signorelli**  
Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees



## Newfoundland and Labrador

### Resignations

On September 5, 2014, Minister of Finance **Charlene Johnson** resigned from the House of Assembly. Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Culture **Terry French** resigned on September 19. The by-election for the District of Conception Bay South vacated by Mr. French has been called for November 5.

### Speaker Appointed to Cabinet

**Ross Wiseman** who had been Speaker of the House since 2011 resigned on September 5 when he was appointed Minister of



Finance. Deputy Speaker **Wade Verge** is acting as Speaker until the House reconvenes when the election of a Speaker will be the first order of business.

### By-election

On August 26, **Scott Reid** was elected in the by-election in St. George's – Stephenville East. The seat was vacated by former Minister of Environment and Conservation **Joan Shea**.

### Leadership Change

At the PC convention held on September 13, **Paul Davis** was elected leader of the party and was sworn in as Premier on September 26, succeeding **Tom Marshall**. The other two candidates were **Steve Kent**, now Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Community Services and **John Ottenheimer**, a former MHA from 1996 to 2007.

The new cabinet was sworn in on September 30. The announcement of the new cabinet was accompanied by a restructuring of government departments and a change in the ministerial assignments of nine ministers. In addition, **Keith Russell**, MHA for the District of Lake Melville, was appointed to cabinet as Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs and **Judy Manning**, who is not a member of the House of Assembly, became the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and the Attorney General. Minister Manning has indicated that she plans to run in the next provincial general election in the District of Placentia and St. Mary's.

The House of Assembly, which does not have a parliamentary calendar, typically re-convenes in mid-November.

**Elizabeth Murphy**  
Clerk Assistant



## Nunavut

### House Proceedings

The spring 2014 sitting of the 2nd Session of the 4th Legislative Assembly convened on May 22, 2014. The proceedings of the Committee of the Whole during the spring 2014 sitting of the House were dominated by the consideration of the Government of Nunavut's proposed 2014-2015 main estimates and departmental business plans.

On June 2, 2014, the Legislative Assembly adopted a motion to recommend the appointment of **Sherry McNeil-Mulak** as Nunavut's first Representative for Children and Youth under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

On June 9, 2014, the Legislative Assembly adopted a motion to establish a Special Committee to Review the *Education Act*. The members of the Special Committee are **George Hickes**, MLA for Iqaluit-Tasiluk, **Paul Quassa**, MLA for Aggu and Minister of Education, **Pat Angnakak**, MLA for Iqaluit-Niaqunngu, **Simeon Mikkungwak**, MLA for Baker Lake and **Joe Savikataaq**, MLA for Arviat South. Mr. Hickes serves as the Chairperson of the Special Committee. The Special Committee is expected to report its findings and recommendations to the House during its fall 2015 sitting.

The fall 2014 sitting of the 2nd Session of the 4th Legislative Assembly convened on October 21, 2014 and concluded

on November 6, 2014. The proceedings of the Committee of the Whole during its fall 2014 sitting of the House were dominated by the consideration of the Government of Nunavut's proposed 2015-2016 capital estimates.

On October 24, 2014, the Legislative Assembly adopted a motion to expel the Member for Uqummiut, **Samuel Nuqingaq**, from the Legislative Assembly and to declare the Member's seat vacant. The motion, which was moved by **Paul Okalik**, MLA for Iqaluit-Sinaa and seconded by Mr. Savikataaq, noted Mr. Nuqingaq's unacceptable conduct, including persistent absences from sittings of the House and meetings of its committees and caucuses without reasonable explanation. The motion was carried unanimously. A by-election will be held on February 19, 2015.

On October 27, 2014, the Legislative Assembly adopted a motion to extend the period of time for the Standing Committee on Legislation to report Bill 1, the proposed *Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Act*, back to the House, by an additional 120 days. The bill sets out the proposed legislative framework for the continuation of the Northern Employee Benefits Services plan as a multi-employer, multi-jurisdictional pension plan for employees of approved public sector employers in northern Canada. A piece of mirror legislation was introduced in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories on February 26, 2014. The motion was moved by Mr. Savikataaq, the Committee Chair. A similar motion was adopted by the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories at its sitting of October 30, 2014.

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## Committee Activities

The Standing Committee on Oversight of Government Operations and Public Accounts, which is chaired by Mr. Hickes, held hearings from September 16-23, 2014, on a number of matters.

From September 16-17, 2014, officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Government of Nunavut's Department of Family Services appeared before the Standing Committee on the occasion of its consideration of the Auditor General's 2014 *Follow-up Report on Child and Family Services in Nunavut*.

On September 18, 2014, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Nunavut, **Elaine Keenan Bengts**, appeared before the Standing Committee on the occasion of its consideration of her 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 annual reports to the Legislative Assembly. Officials from the Government of Nunavut's Department of Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs subsequently appeared before the Standing Committee on September 19, 2014.

On September 22, 2014, the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, **Sandra Inutiq**, appeared before the Standing Committee on the occasion of its consideration of her 2012-2013 annual report to the Legislative Assembly.

On September 23, 2014, the President of the Qulliq Energy Corporation appeared before the Standing Committee on the occasion of its consideration of the corporation's 2012-2013 annual report and 2014-2018 corporate plan.

The Standing Committee's hearings were televised live across Nunavut on local community cable stations and direct-to-home satellite service.

Reports from the Standing Committee's hearings were presented to the House during the week of October 27-31, 2014.

## Order of Nunavut

The 2014 investiture ceremony for the Order of Nunavut was held in the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly on October 28, 2014. The ceremony was presided over by Speaker **George Qulaut** in his capacity as Chair of the Order of Nunavut Advisory Council and Commissioner **Edna Elias** in her capacity as Chancellor of the Order of Nunavut.

The objective of the Order is to recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the cultural, social or economic well-being of Nunavut. The Order is the highest honour of Nunavut and takes precedence over all other orders, decorations or medals conferred by the Government of Nunavut.

In September, the Order of Nunavut Advisory Council announced that **John Amagoalik** was the 2014 recipient of the Order of Nunavut. Mr. Amagoalik's leadership career began in the 1970s, at the beginning of the movement to establish Nunavut. Mr. Amagoalik has served as the President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Co-Chair of the Inuit Committee on National Issues, Chair of the Nunavut Constitutional Forum and Chief Commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission. Mr. Amagoalik has received numerous awards in recognition of his contributions, including

the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and a National Aboriginal Achievement Award.

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## Corrigendum

The Nunavut Legislative Report that was published in the summer 2014 edition of Canadian Parliamentary Review indicated that a territory-wide plebiscite concerning the alienation of municipal lands, pursuant to Article 14.8.4 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, will be held in 2015. The submission to the Review should have noted that the vote will take place in 2016.

**Alex Baldwin**

Office of the Legislative Assembly  
of Nunavut



## Prince Edward Island

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### Fifth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly

The Fifth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly opens on November 12, 2014, with the Speech from the Throne delivered by Lieutenant Governor **H. Frank Lewis**. It has been more than three decades since a General Assembly on Prince Edward Island went into a Fifth Session. The Fifth Session of the Fifty-third General Assembly opened on March 1, 1978.

The Fourth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly will be prorogued on November 8, 2014.

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## Legislative Assembly to Move in Early 2015

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In mid-October it was announced that the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island will be vacating Province House, its home since 1847, in early 2015 in advance of extensive conservation work on the building. The work to conserve Province House is anticipated to last three to five years.

The Legislative Chamber will be relocated to the Hon. George Coles Building, adjacent to Province House on Richmond Street in Charlottetown. The administrative, security and press offices will also be located in the Coles Building. The Office of the Speaker and the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly will be moved to a building which is situated immediately east of the Hon. George Coles Building. Legislative standing committees will meet in a satellite location, the J. Angus MacLean Building, which currently houses the Hansard offices. All three buildings are within a city block of one another, in the heart of historic Charlottetown.

“On behalf of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management, we are very pleased that Parks Canada is undertaking this conservation to historic Province House, and following the fall sitting of the legislature, we look forward to our interim home in the Coles Building,” said Speaker **Carolyn Bertram**.

**Marian Johnston**  
Clerk assistant and Clerk of  
Committees



## Saskatchewan

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### Throne Speech

The Fourth session of the Twenty-seventh Legislature began with the Speech from the Throne by Lieutenant Governor, **Vaughn Solomon Schofield** on October 22, 2014. The Throne Speech, entitled *Keeping Saskatchewan Strong*, focused on the economy and announced tax incentives for the creation of new manufacturing jobs as well as additional Adult Basic Education and apprentice training seats. Other highlights included the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy and planned upgrades to internet access at the regional colleges. The Opposition argued that the Throne Speech did not address issues in health care, seniors care, cost of living and education.

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### Resignation of Member

**Tim McMillan**, the Member from Lloydminster and Minister responsible for Rural and Remote Health, tendered his resignation on September 18, 2014, effective September 30, 2014. He immediately resigned from cabinet which led Premier **Brad Wall** to appoint **Greg Ottenbreit** as the new Minister on September 24, 2014.

With Mr. Ottenbreit's appointment to cabinet, other Members found themselves in

new roles. **Herb Cox** became the new Government Whip. **Fred Bradshaw** became the new Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies and **Delbert Kirsch** became the new Deputy Chair of Committees.

It was announced on October 16, 2014 that a by-election for the constituency of Lloydminster would be held on November 13, 2014.

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### *The Executive Government Administration Act*

On May 14, 2014, Bill No. 129 - *The Executive Government Administration Act* and Bill No. 130 - *The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendments Act, 2013 / Projet de loi no 130 – Loi de 2013 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Executive Government Administration Act* were given Royal Assent in the Assembly.

On August 15, 2014, Bill No. 130, which separated the Executive Council and Legislative Assembly, was proclaimed and made law. The Executive Council provisions are now included in *The Executive Government Administration Act*. The Legislative Assembly had a separate act from 1906 to 1979, when it was combined with Executive Council.

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### Confederation Table

The Legislative Assembly is loaning its fabled “Confederation Table” to the Canadian Museum of History for an upcoming exhibit entitled “1867.” According to oral history, the Fathers of Confederation are said to have sat around this table during the national Conference of 1864. Records have not been found to prove or disprove the story. The certainty is that it was used by the Privy Council in Ottawa in 1865.



Lieutenant Governor Dewdney arranged for the table to be brought to Regina in the period 1883-92. By 1908, it had become the Legislative Assembly's House table. It was shortened by 6 feet in order to fit the limited quarters of the Assembly prior to establishment of the Legislative Building.

In 1914, the Assembly de-commissioned the table and placed it in the Legislative Library.

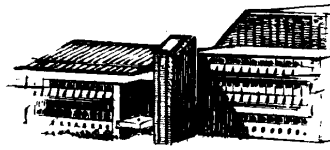
### Dome Refurbishment

The dome at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building is undergoing significant renovations. Substantial damage has occurred due to excess moisture. The cost of the project is estimated to be \$15 million plus additional costs for masonry and coppersmith work. The renovations are expected to be completed by December 2015.

Some notable facts about the renovation include:

- Replacement Tyndall Stone is quarried in Garson, Manitoba by Gillis Quarries Ltd.
- The vinyl weather resistant cloth covering the dome is designed to keep the work area above 9°C so the mortar will cure properly and the work can continue through winter.
- The crane height required clearance from Regina Airport Authority, NAV Canada and Transport Canada to be installed.
- New copper will be installed at the top of the dome and may take 1-3 years to oxidize and change colour from bronze to green to black.

**Stacey Ursulescu**  
Committee Clerk



## Yukon

### Committee Service

The 2014 Fall Sitting of the 1st Session of the 33rd Yukon Legislative Assembly convened on Thursday, October 23rd, and is expected to rise on Thursday, December 18th.

### In Remembrance

The tragic events in Ottawa having only occurred the preceding day, MLAs' first day back in the Chamber featured heightened security measures. Following the prayer, Speaker **David Laxton**, a 22-year veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, called for a moment of silence in memory of and respect for Warrant Officer **Patrice Vincent** and Corporal **Nathan Cirillo**. Premier **Darrell Pasloski**,

Official Opposition Leader **Liz Hanson**, and Third Party Leader **Sandy Silver** offered tributes in remembrance of the soldiers and the attack on Parliament Hill.

### Mace

Also on opening day, the Speaker delivered a statement regarding the refurbishment of the Legislative Assembly's Mace, which had travelled to Toronto for re-plating during the summer recess. While there, the Mace's more than 50 pieces had been cleaned, re-plated, and reassembled by Corona Jewellery Company, the same company that had refurbished the Ontario Legislative Assembly's Mace in 2009. The Speaker noted that hand-polishing alone of Yukon's (now gleaming) Mace took over 24 hours. Inspector Rick Boon of the Ontario legislative security service escorted the Mace safely back to Whitehorse.

### Hydraulic Fracturing Committee

On October 8, the very active Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing (RBHF) issued a news



The dome at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building is undergoing significant renovations.



release and a progress report. The news release stated that the Committee had completed its public hearings and was preparing its final report (which must be presented during the 2014 Fall Sitting). It also noted that the Committee had heard from “over 240 individuals at 13 public hearings held in 12 Yukon communities ... [and] received 434 written submissions before the September 30, 2014 deadline for comments from the public.” The public hearings took place this year in June, July, and September.

Information about the committee and its work can be found at: <http://www.legassembly.gov.yk.ca/rbhf.html>

**Linda Kolody**  
Deputy Clerk



## The Northwest Territories

### Legislation

The Fifth Session of the 17th Legislative Assembly reconvened on October 16, 2014 and was scheduled to sit until November 6, 2014. During this sitting, the House considered the 2015-2016 Capital Estimates, two supplementary appropriation bills dealing with both infrastructure and operations expenditures, as well as legislation including *the Human Tissue Donation Act*, and amendments to *the Education Act*, *the Public Service Act* and *the Pharmacy Act*.

### Committees

From September 8-26, 2014, the Standing Committees of the

Legislative Assembly reviewed departmental business plans for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure, the Standing Committee on Government Operations, and the Standing Committee on Social Programs met with the ministers and senior officials from all government departments as part of the review process.

On October 16, 2014, the Government of the Northwest Territories tabled its response to the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2014 *Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Northwest Territories Child and Family Services* along with *Building Stronger Families: An Action Plan to Transform Child and Family Services*. These documents address the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Government Operations with respect to changes necessary in child and family services and describe how these changes will be accomplished.

Following the release of its June, 2014 report titled *Establishing an Office of the Ombudsman for the Northwest Territories*, the Standing Committee on Government Operations invited **André Marin**, Ombudsman of Ontario, to visit Yellowknife. During his visit Mr. Marin met with Committee Members and participated in a Town Hall meeting with the general public on the role and potential contributions of an Ombudsman.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations continues to consider Bill 12: *Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan Act*. The act sets out the legislative framework for the continuation of the

Northern Employee Benefits Services (NEBS) Pension Plan to continue as a multi-employer, multi-jurisdictional public sector pension plan for employees of approved public sector employers in both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Bill 1, which is before the Nunavut Standing Committee on Legislation, largely mirrors Bill 12.

On October 30, 2014, the Legislative Assembly adopted a motion to extend the review period for Bill 12 for a further 120 days. During the same week the Nunavut Legislative Assembly also adopted a motion to extend the period of time for their Committee to report Bill 1 by a further 120 days.

Following the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures' *Report on the Review of the Auxiliary Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Issues Arising from the 2011 General Election*, which was presented to the House in June, an *Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act*, No. 2 was introduced in the Assembly. The Bill amended *the Elections and Plebiscites Act* to: replace the provisions for advance polls with a new special voting opportunity; modernize requirements relating to campaigning, including requirements with respect to campaign advertising and sponsor identification; require candidates to file statements from banks or approved institutions in support of their financial reports; increase the number of electors for whom another elector may vouch and prohibit candidates from vouching; prohibit candidates from accepting more than \$1,500 in anonymous contributions; permit candidates to pay for petty expenses incurred in a campaign period;

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enhance the investigation and enforcement powers of the Chief Electoral Officer; and modernize the drafting of the offence provisions.

The Caucus of the 17th Legislative Assembly has clarified its position on the timing of the next territorial general election. Bill 34: *2015 Polling Day Act* establishes April 1, 2015 as the “trigger date” with regards to the timing of the next Northwest Territories general election. If, by April 1, 2015, the date of the federal election continues to overlap with the campaign period for the territorial election, the date of the territorial election will be postponed to November 23, 2015. However, if an announcement is made to change the timing of the federal election prior to April 1, 2015, the territorial election will proceed as planned on October 5, 2015. The bill will be contingent upon the passage of amendments to *the Northwest Territories Act* by the Parliament of Canada.

### Caucus Retreat

Members of the 17th Assembly gathered for a Caucus retreat at the K’atl’odeeche First Nation Wilderness Lodge from August 19-21, 2014. The retreat included a review of the proposed revisions of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, discussions on consensus protocols, a tour of the new Hay River Regional Health Centre as well as a community feast at the K’atl’odeeche First Nation’s Chief Lamalice Complex.

### New Chief Electoral Officer

On October 24, 2014 **Nicole Latour** was appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer for the Northwest Territories, pursuant to Section 5 of *the Elections and*

*Plebiscites Act*. Ms. Latour’s four-year term took effect on November 1, 2014.

As Chief Electoral Officer, Ms. Latour will be responsible for the conduct of territorial elections and plebiscites. In addition, the Chief Electoral Officer will establish policies and procedures, manage the Register of Territorial Electors, supply training and guidance to electoral officers, and provide advice and recommendations to the Legislative Assembly regarding election legislation and policy.

### Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

In August the Legislative Assembly welcomed the return of its Clerk, **Tim Mercer**. Mr. Mercer and his family spent the previous year traveling the country and the world, from Yukon to Newfoundland and Labrador and from New Zealand to Germany.

### Building Anniversary

November 2013 marked the 20th anniversary of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly building. On September 19, 2014 the Legislative Assembly concluded its 20th anniversary celebrations with the burial of a time capsule, which is scheduled to be unearthed during the building’s 50th anniversary celebrations. The time capsule contains items such as letters, photos, artwork, and books submitted by all Members of the 17th Assembly, Legislative Assembly staff and northern students.

**Michael Ball**

Principal Clerk, Committees and Public Affairs



## House of Commons

The Second Session of the 41st Parliament continued as the House reconvened on September 15, 2014, having adjourned for the summer on June 20, 2014. The information below covers the period from August 1 to October 31, 2014.

### Financial Procedures

On October 10, 2014, the Government tabled a Notice of a Ways and Means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures (Ways and Means No. 14). The details of the proposed taxation measures had been mistakenly posted on the website of the Department of Finance prior to the tabling.

### Procedure, Points of Order and Questions of Privilege

#### Procedure

On September 19, 2014, **Yvon Godin** (Acadie—Bathurst) moved for leave to introduce a bill entitled, *An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Nepisiguit River)*. Pursuant to Standing Order 68(2), the motion was deemed adopted, but the Bill was not read the first time, ordered to be printed and ordered for a second reading at the next sitting of the House since Mr. Godin immediately moved to proceed to the next rubric

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in Routine Proceedings, First Reading of Senate Public Bills. As the motion was agreed to, the Bill remains on the *Order Paper* awaiting first reading.

During Oral Questions on September 23, 2014, **Thomas Mulcair** (Leader of the Opposition), not satisfied with the answers from **Paul Calandra** (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs) questioned the neutrality of the Speaker. The following day, the Speaker made a statement on the subject of the role of the Speaker during Question Period, emphasizing the long-standing tradition that the Speaker has no authority over the content of the answers to questions; he added that the rules governing repetition and relevance do not apply to Question Period. He reminded Members that reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege.

### Points of Order

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**Randall Garrison** (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) rose on a point of order, urging the Speaker to select for debate his report stage amendment for Bill C-13, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act* on the ground that it was of exceptional significance. Although his amendment had been defeated in committee, he asserted that the Bill, as adopted by the Committee, would effectively override part of Bill C-279, *An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity)*, which had been passed by a majority of Members from all parties in the House of Commons,

and that his amendment would allow Members to express themselves on the issue. In response, the Speaker stated that Mr. Garrison's belief that the outcome of consideration of the motion by the House might be different from that in committee was not sufficient ground for the Chair to determine that exceptional circumstances existed that would warrant the selection of this particular amendment.

### Questions of Privilege

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On September 15, 2014, **Elizabeth May** (Saanich—Gulf Islands) rose on a question of privilege to object to the use of time allocation by the Government to curtail debate on various legislative initiatives of the Crown. She drew attention to the negative effect that the curtailment of debate has on the ability of all Members, and Independent Members in particular, to contribute to legislative debates, and asked the Speaker to protect the rights and privileges of all Members to speak to motions.

On September 25, 2014, Mr. Godin rose on a question of privilege with respect to his having been denied access to the House of Commons by an RCMP officer earlier that day due to a visit by a foreign dignitary. Other Members agreed that the principle of access to the precinct was an important one. Later in the day, the Speaker ruled that the denial of access by Members to the precinct is a serious matter, and, accordingly, there was, in this instance, a *prima facie* case of privilege; whereupon, Mr. Godin, moved a motion to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. After debate, the motion was agreed to.

### Committees

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The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs met on October 2, 9, 21, and 30, 2014, to consider the *prima facie* case of privilege referred to it by the House in connection with the denial of access to the parliamentary precinct on the part of Mr. Godin. At the third of these meetings, the Sergeant-at-Arms and his deputy, as well as senior officers of the R.C.M.P. and the Ottawa Police Service, were present to discuss the incident which gave rise to the question of privilege. At the time of writing, the Committee had not yet reported back to the House.

On September 30, 2014, **Joe Preston** (Elgin—Middlesex—London) presented to the House the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. He has sought and been denied unanimous consent for concurrence in the report on several occasions.

At the conclusion of Oral Questions on September 30, 2014, **Brad Trost** (Saskatoon—Humboldt) directed a question to Mr. Preston in his capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The question concerned the reasons for the opposition of NDP Members to the Committee's latest report. The Speaker ruled the question out of order as it did not fall within the acceptable parameters for questions to Committee Chairs. Subsequently, during Oral Questions on October 30, 2014, Mr. Preston replied to a question from **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North) regarding the Committee's upcoming agenda and its 18th report.



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## Other Matters

On September 15, 2014, the Speaker asked Members to join him in welcoming Acting Clerk **Marc Bosc** and in sending best wishes to **Audrey O'Brien** (Clerk of the House), who had recently undergone emergency surgery, for a speedy recovery.

On October 22, 2014, the House did not sit because of the attacks that day at the National War Memorial and in the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings. On October 23, 2014, exceptionally, the doors of the House of Commons were open to the public prior to the reading of the Prayers, and these proceedings were televised. During Routine Proceedings, the leaders of the three recognized parties made statements reflecting on the events of October 22, 2014 and expressing thanks to the police and security personnel involved in protecting the Members and staff of the House. By unanimous consent the House also heard statements on the subject by representatives of the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party and Forces et Démocratie, as well as by Independent Member **Maria Mourani** (Ahuntsic). A moment of silence was observed in memory of Corporal **Nathan Cirillo**. The Speaker also made a statement to the House with regard to steps being taken to ensure the security of Members and House staff.

On October 23, 2014, a motion was adopted further deferring all votes that had been scheduled for the previous day and deeming the House to have sat on that day for the purposes of Standing Order 28 which regulates the calendar of the House of Commons.

## Members

On September 15, 2014, the Speaker informed the House that the Clerk had received from the Chief Electoral Officer certificates of election for four new Members: **John Barlow** (Macleod); **Arnold Chan** (Scarborough—Agincourt); **Adam Vaughan** (Trinity—Spadina); and **David Yurdiga** (Fort McMurray—Athabasca).

Effective September 17, 2014, **Rob Merrifield** (Yellowhead) resigned as a Member of Parliament. **Stella Ambler** (Mississauga South) was appointed as a member of the Board of Internal Economy as a replacement for Mr. Merrifield effective September 26, 2014.

Effective October 21, 2014, **Jean-François Larose** (Repentigny) withdrew from the New Democratic Party caucus, and, with **Jean-François Fortin** (Haute-Gaspésie--La Mitis--Matane--Matapédia), an Independent Member, announced their intention to sit as Members of a new political party, "Forces et Démocratie".

## Statements, Resolutions, Special Debates

On September 15 and 16, 2014, the House held emergency debates on the Ebola outbreak and on the situation in Iraq, respectively.

At 2:00 p.m. on September 17, 2014, His Excellency **Petro Poroshenko**, President of Ukraine, addressed both Houses of Parliament jointly assembled in the Chamber of the House of Commons. On October 3, 2014, during Statements by Ministers, **Stephen Harper** (Prime Minister), followed by Mr. Mulcair and **Justin Trudeau** (Leader of the Liberal Party) made statements on the Canadian

military mission in Iraq. By unanimous consent, Ms. May also made a statement. Following this, on October 6, 2014, the House of Commons debated a government motion regarding a Canadian military mission in Iraq. The motion was adopted on October 7, 2014.

On October 21, 2014, the House adopted a motion conferring honorary Canadian Citizenship on **Malala Yousafzai** in recognition of her advocacy of fundamental human rights and access to education, in particular for girls and women.

Gary Sokolyk

Table Research Branch



## Ontario

### Standing Committee on Estimates

Before the House adjourned on July 24, 2014, it authorized the Standing Committee on Estimates to hold six meetings during the summer adjournment in order to consider the 2014-2015 printed Estimates. The Order of the House delegated the selection of the estimates of the ministries and offices for the Committee's consideration to the House Leaders of the recognized parties, a selection process that would normally be done by Committee Members once the estimates had been tabled and referred to the Committee.



The procedures for the review of the estimates in Ontario are defined in the Standing Orders. The estimates are considered in the order selected. The selection process occurs in two rounds with the Official Opposition members choosing first followed by the Third Party members and the Government members on the Committee. In authorizing the additional meetings, the House also altered the order of consideration of the selections submitted by the House Leaders so that the Committee would review all the selections made by the Official Opposition before the ones chosen by the Third Party and the Government.

The Committee met for the first time since the spring election on September 30, 2014. An organization meeting was necessary to elect a Chair and a Vice-chair and to appoint a Sub-committee on committee business. Prior to reviewing the estimates of the first selected ministry and at the request of the three House Leaders, by unanimous consent the Committee switched the order of consideration of two ministries in order to accommodate the respective ministers' schedules. The Committee was scheduled to hold approximately 45 hours of review of the selected estimates before it reported back to the House by the fourth Thursday in November. The authorization from the House extended the timeline to report back the estimates by one week, as the Committee is required by standing order to report back to the House by the third Thursday in November.

The House reconvened on October 20, 2014. During that week, the remaining standing committees met for the first time

since the spring election, for the purpose of electing Chairs and Vice-chairs and to appoint a Sub-committee on committee business.

### New Lieutenant Governor

The Province of Ontario bid farewell to its 28th Lieutenant Governor, **David C. Onley**, on September 22, 2014. The installation ceremony of **Elizabeth Dowdeswell**, Ontario's 29th Lieutenant Governor, took place on September 23, 2014 in the Legislative Chamber. Chief Justice of Ontario **George R. Strathy** administered the Oath of Allegiance and the Oaths of Office.

**Tamara Pomanski**  
Committee Clerk



### National Assembly

The National Assembly held an extraordinary sitting on July 3, 2014 to complete the consideration and adoption of the estimates of expenditure for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. This sitting, held outside of the parliamentary calendar, was a follow-up to the standing committees' examination of the 2014-2015 estimates of expenditure that was exceptionally carried out after the Assembly had adjourned for the summer recess on June 13, 2014.

The National Assembly resumed its proceedings on September 16, 2014. Bills introduced in September include:

Bill 10, *An Act to modify the organization and governance of the health and social services network, in particular by abolishing the regional agencies*, which modifies the organization and governance of the health and social services network through the regional integration of health services and social services, the creation of institutions with a broader mission, and the implementation of a two-tier management structure; and Bill 11, *An Act respecting the Société du Plan Nord*, which establishes the Société du Plan Nord (the Company), whose mission is to contribute to the integrated and coherent development of the area covered by the Northern Plan, in keeping with the principle of sustainable development and in accordance with the policy directions defined by the Government in relation to the Northern Plan.

### Composition and parliamentary offices

Two Members handed in their resignation in recent months: **Christian Dubé**, Coalition Avenir Québec Member for the electoral division of Lévis, on August 15, 2014; and **Élaine Zakaïb**, Parti Québécois Member for the electoral division of Richelieu, on September 29, 2014.

The composition of the Assembly is now as follows: Québec Liberal Party, 70 Members; Parti Québécois, 29 Members; Coalition Avenir Québec, 21 Members; 3 independent Members, all of whom sit under the banner of Québec Solidaire; and two vacant seats.

### Rulings and directives from the Chair

On September 23, 2014, the Chair gave the following ruling

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on a point of order raised by the Government House Leader concerning the receivability of a motion without notice moved by the Member for La Peltre, who had quoted from a letter containing arguments and unparliamentary language.

“When there is consent to move a motion without notice, the Chair generally does not rule, on its own initiative, on the motion’s receivability. It therefore happens that motions which do not entirely comply with the Standing Orders are put to the Assembly. However, once the question of receivability has been raised, the chair is bound to make a ruling, taking into account the rules of parliamentary law. Before the Chair can put the question of a motion without notice before the Assembly, the motion must first be ruled receivable. Standing Order 191 states that motions should not recite the grounds on which they are moved or the arguments in behalf of their object. In the case at hand, the motion, as drafted, contains elements that fall within the category of “grounds or arguments”, because they set out the reasons that differentiate two situations and the arguments supporting that contention. Such elements should not be included in the text of a motion. Instead, they should be put forth during the motion’s debate phase, minding the terms used are in keeping with parliamentary language. One cannot introduce elements, by quoting a letter, which would otherwise be prohibited in our debates. For these reasons, the motion by the Member for La Peltre is non-receivable and, as such, cannot be the object of consent to debate it.”

## Other events

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In August 2014, the National Assembly launched its new youth website, *Par ici la démocratie*. This modern, user-friendly pedagogical tool is a reliable reference for historic information and citizenship education. This new online site reflects the National Assembly’s desire to reach out to young people in their schools to educate them on the role of parliamentarians and democracy in society.

On September 18, 2014, the President of the National Assembly, **Jacques Chagnon**, unveiled a plaque honouring the memory of the three victims who died during the shooting that took place at the National Assembly on May 8, 1984. The Leader of the Second Opposition Group, **François Legault**, the Leader of the Official Opposition, **Stéphane Bédard**, and Premier **Philippe Couillard**, also took the floor during this commemorative ceremony.

## Standing committees

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Following a brief summer break that began on July 3, after the examination of the estimates of expenditure, the standing committees resumed their activities in August. The Committee on Citizen Relations (CCR) set the current period of work in motion on August 19 by hearing four groups during special consultations and public hearings held on Bill 2, *An Act to amend the Educational Childcare Act*.

The next day, on August 20, the Committee on Planning and the Public Domain (CPP) held special consultations and public hearings on Bill 3, *An Act to foster the financial health and sustainability of municipal defined benefit pension plans*. This bill,

which affects 170 plans, proposes the equal sharing of costs and the sharing of future deficiencies between the active members and the municipal body. It further proposes to limit the employer’s contribution to 18 per cent of the overall payroll and to prohibit automatic indexation. In all, the CPP heard 28 groups over a five-day period.

On September 9, the Committee on Labour and the Economy (CLE) exchanged views with six groups during special consultations and public hearings on Bill 8, *An Act to amend the Labour Code with respect to certain employees of farming businesses*. This bill defines the rights of association in farming businesses that employ fewer than three employees.

The Committee on Institutions (CI) carried out two orders of accountability in compliance with the Standing Orders. First, in accordance with the power it has under Standing Order 294.1 to hear persons appointed by the National Assembly, the Committee held a public hearing on the Public Protector. The Public Protector, **Raymonde Saint-Germain**, presented a status report, underlined the challenges faced by the organization and answered members’ questions. Following this hearing, the Committee adopted an order of initiative for the purpose of hearing Hydro-Québec on the possibility of its becoming subject to the Public Protector’s power of intervention. The Committee will hear the Government corporation in October 2014. Second, in pursuance of Standing Orders 293.1 and 294, the CI examined the policy directions, activities and administrative management of the Coroner.

Finally, the Committee on Public Finance (CPF) held an election to fill the vacant position of vice-chair following the resignation of Mr. Dubé, Member for Lévis, on August 15, 2014. The Member for Beauce-Nord, **André Spénard**, was elected to this office. It should be noted that in accordance with the amendments made to the Standing Orders for the duration of the 41st Legislature, the CPF has two vice-chairs.

**Cédric Drouin and Sylvia Ford**  
Parliamentary Proceedings  
Directorate



## New Brunswick

It was a rewarding summer for the Legislative Assembly. Members and staff were pleased to welcome delegates from across Canada and a number of internationally-distinguished guests as hosts of the 52nd Canadian Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The conference, which took place in Fredericton from July 20-26, invited over 80 delegates and their families to enjoy the province and participate in discussions touching all Canadian legislatures. Business sessions included such topics

as pension plan reform, the importance of debating social issues in parliament, the role of the Senate and possible reform, the recent flooding in the prairie provinces, the role of a backbench member, the Speaker in schools program, democratic engagement of people with disabilities, and emergency service measures in the Yukon. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians also held business sessions including family violence research and the rise of women's issues as normative discourse in legislatures.

Prior to the dissolution of the Legislature in August, the Legislative Assembly reconvened for a one-day sitting on July 29. Justice Minister **Troy Lifford** introduced Bill 92, *An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act*. The legislation enabled retirees under the Fraser Papers' pension plan to benefit from increased pension payouts and to have their plan converted to a shared risk pension model. The 57th Legislative Assembly subsequently dissolved on August 22. At dissolution, the standings in the House were: 41 Progressive Conservatives; 13 Liberals, and one Independent.

New Brunswickers elected a new government on September 22. The results of the provincial election gave the Liberals a majority government with 27 seats, while the Progressive Conservatives won 21. The Green Party won their first seat in New Brunswick's history by electing their leader, **David Coon**. In total, 21 new members were elected.

On October 7, **Brian Gallant**, the Liberal Member for Shediac Bay-Dieppe, and the province's 33rd Premier, was sworn into Office along with 12 Ministers in a ceremony held

in the Assembly Chamber. The Executive Councillor's Oath was administered by Lieutenant-Governor **Graydon Nicholas**.

Premier Gallant was elected Leader of the New Brunswick Liberal Party on October 27, 2012, and first elected to the Legislative Assembly in a by-election held on April 15, 2013, to represent the riding of Kent.

Premier Gallant's Cabinet consists of the following Members: **Stephen Horsman**, Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety, Solicitor General, Minister of Justice; **Denis Landry**, Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Human Resources; **Donald Arseneault**, Minister of Energy and Mines; **Rick Doucet**, Minister of Economic Development, Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries; **Victor Boudreau**, Minister of Health; **Ed Doherty**, Minister of Government Services; **Brian Kenny**, Minister of Environment and Local Government; **Bill Fraser**, Minister of Tourism, Heritage and Culture; **Roger Melanson**, Minister of Finance, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure; **Francine Landry**, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; **Cathy Rogers**, Minister of Social Development, Minister of Healthy and Inclusive Communities; **Serge Rousselle**, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Attorney General.

Premier Gallant announced the appointment of **Hédard Albert** as Government House Leader and Government Whip; **Bill Fraser** as Deputy Government House Leader; **Daniel Guitard** as Deputy Government Whip; and **Monique LeBlanc** as Government Caucus Chair.

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Premier Gallant also nominated **Lisa Harris** and **Bernard LeBlanc** as Deputy Speakers. Their nominations must be formally ratified by the House.

The former Premier, **David Alward**, stepped down as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party on September 23. Alward was first elected in the 1999 provincial election, and was re-elected in 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2014. He was elected Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in 2008, and became the 32nd Premier of New Brunswick in 2010.

**Bruce Fitch** was named Interim Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party on October 18, and will take on the position of Leader of the Official Opposition. Mr. Fitch, a former Cabinet Minister in the Lord and Alward governments, was first elected to the New Brunswick legislature in the 2003 provincial election, and was re-elected in 2006, 2010 and 2014.

The Official Opposition announced the appointment of **Madeleine Dubé** as Opposition

House Leader; **Carl Urquhart** as Opposition Whip; and **Pam Lynch** as Opposition Caucus Chair.

On October 14, newly elected Liberal MLA **Gary Keating** resigned from his position. Mr. Keating was elected in Saint John East by a margin of less than 10 votes. A by-election is scheduled for November 17.

On October 23, a ceremony was held in the Legislative Assembly Chamber for the installation of the new Lieutenant-Governor, **Jocelyne Roy Vienneau**. Her Honour served as the vice-president of the Université de Moncton's Shippagan campus, the CEO of the Bathurst campus of the New Brunswick Community College system and the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Education. She was appointed as the 31st Lieutenant-Governor and replaces Mr. Nicholas, who served as Lieutenant-Governor since 2009.

On the morning of October 24, Members of the 58th Legislative Assembly took their

Oath of Allegiance and signed the Members' Roll during a ceremony in the Chamber, presided over by the new Lieutenant-Governor.

On the afternoon of October 24, the House convened for the election of Speaker. Liberal MLA **Chris Collins** was elected on the first ballot. Speaker Collins was first elected as the Member for Moncton East in a by-election held on March 5, 2007, after serving on Moncton City Council. He served as Government Whip and was named Minister of Local Government in January of 2010. Re-elected in September of 2010, he served as Education critic for the Official Opposition and has also acted as critic for Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Environment; Energy; and Justice.

The First Session of the 58th Legislative Assembly is expected to open with the Speech from the Throne on December 3.

**John-Patrick McLeave**  
Committee Clerk, Research Assistant