

EMBARGOED until February 18th, 2014

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Canadians award political parties largely failing grades

Parties have a long way to go if they're to engage Canadians in politics

Toronto, February 18, 2014—As the government's proposed Bill C-23 (Fair Elections Act) places new attention on the role of political parties in increasing voter turnout, new research reveals that parties have work to do if they hope to better reach Canadians.

A new report from Samara, "By Invitation Only: Canadians' Perceptions of Political Parties," clarifies what Canadians think parties should be doing, and reveals where they believe parties could most improve. Though more than half of respondents agreed that parties' most important job is "reaching out so Canadians' views can be represented," this role received the lowest grade—a failing mark of 43%.

Overall, Canadians issue a disappointing report card on political parties—awarding only Ds and Fs across six core roles.

"Though Bill C-23 raises the important role candidates and parties play in engaging Canadians in politics, this research, combined with low party membership numbers, suggest that—regardless of partisan stripe—parties must do more to overcome Canadians' prevailing opinions that parties are closed shops," said Michael MacMillan, Samara's co-founder and chair.

"Parties are rare national organizations that have a local presence in all communities across Canada, that capture regular media attention and have a mandate to talk to Canadians about policy and the future of the country. Those that make citizens feel heard may be rewarded with support from a broader base of Canadians," added Alison Loat, Samara's co-founder and executive director.

The link to the complete report will be visible as of 12:01 am on February 18th, 2014 at:

<http://www.samaracanada.com/research/current-research/by-invitation-only>

About Samara's Democracy Reports

"By Invitation Only" is part of the [Samara Democracy Reports](#) series, which is designed to shine a light on Canada's democratic system and increase Canadians' understanding of politics. Previous reports examined the 20 ways Canadians participate in politics between elections, explored the attitudes of people who do not vote, offered citizens' performance reviews for MPs and analyzed how well discussion in the House of Commons mirrored Canadians concerns.

The findings are based on the results of the national Samara Citizens' Survey, designed by Samara's staff with guidance from a team of academics from universities across Canada. The complete questions and methodology is available in the report.

About Samara

Samara is a charity dedicated to improving political participation in Canada. Through research and educational programs, Samara reconnects citizens to politics. Samara is funded by charitable donations from foundations and individuals from across the country.

We are always available to comment on our areas of research, which include citizen participation and voting behaviour, political leadership and Members of Parliament, and political parties. Our research and programming can be found at www.samaracanada.com, or via Twitter [@SamaraCda](https://twitter.com/SamaraCda).