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Vicky Mochama: The voice of Metro News.

# How to silence heckling MPs in the animal House: Mochama

Boo. Hiss. Meow? A proposal for a return to tradition in the House of Commons. A return to MPs making animal noises.



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SEAN KILPATRICK / THE CANADIAN PRESS

A new survey of Members of Parliament shows a majority have heckled in the House of Commons.

By: **Vicky Mochama** Metro Published on Wed Oct 25 2017

I'd like to bring back meowing to the House of Commons.

If you have ever watched our illustrious federal representatives during Question Period, you're struck by how rowdy they are. One member rises to ask a question like, "When will the minister for natural resources admit that not only does he eat trees but that he does so at the expense of hardworking Canadians?" The minister for natural resources stands up to respond, "This government stands up for tree-eating Canadians who have had their rights to munch on all trees, deciduous and evergreen, limited by the previous government of which the honourable member is a part."

Neither person uses their Indoor Voice. And if this particular exchange sounds made up, it is because it's hard to hear anything at all, even valid questions about eating trees, amid the heckling.

The presence of heckling in the house is an issue Samara Canada, a non-partisan think tank, tackled in a recent report called "No One Is Listening."



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The report found that a slim majority of MPs surveyed said heckling is a problem and three-quarters of them believe the public thinks badly of it. None of which has stopped a majority of MPs who say they've heckled in the House. (One-quarter of MPs responded to the survey.)

Many of them report that disruptive outbursts while someone else talks are a matter of parliamentary tradition.

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There are few jobs in which "rudeness is our tradition" and "everyone else is doing it" are sound excuses. The only jobs that allow rudeness as a point of pride are turn-of-the-century dockworker and President of the United States.

This brings us back to meowing which has historical precedent. According to Samara's report, "In the early years after Confederation, MPs meowed like cats, made music to drown out other Members, and (at least once) set off firecrackers in the House."

Rather than campaigning to abolish heckling, maybe it's time to get creative.

I don't foresee our leaders in Parliament giving up their right to yell abruptly, but if they must, they should only be allowed to make animal noises.

This genre offers a plethora of options.

For example, a good friend of mine and a respected political commentator makes a very loud and convincing duck noise.

One would have to feel very strongly about, say, a motion to prevent the eating of trees if, in order to heckle, you had to quack your opposition.

My vote is for meowing because I don't like cats and I'd like to sabotage their brand as much as possible. So if our elected politicians are going to be disrespectful in our House of Commons, they might as well channel the animal that holds us all in contempt.

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