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Review of Members of Parliament's websites shows most fail to seize digital opportunities to connect with Canadians.

Toronto, December 2nd 2013—Most Members of Parliament fail to use their websites to offer citizens a way to engage with politics or to share their views. That's according to new research by charitable think tank Samara, who performed an analysis of all MP websites to see what information they provide and how they enable Canadians to engage with politics.

Among the websites analyzed:

- Less than half offered an e-newsletter sign-up
- Only 23% explained how constituents could submit petitions or hosted ones for signature
- Only 11% offer a public space to leave feedback or ideas
- Only 5% describe volunteer opportunities with the MP's office
- Five MPs were missing websites altogether

"It's never been easier to hear what Canadians want: there are online surveys, polls, discussion forums and commenting functions. But few MPs appear to take advantage of these technological innovations," says Alison Loat, Samara's Executive Director.

On the positive side, 98% of MP websites provided an office address and 97% included an email contact and a biography.

Samara's public opinion research shows that Canadians give MPs a failing grade (46%) on representing the views of constituents. MPs should use all available tools—including their publicly funded websites—to better do this.

Yet, Samara's exit interviews with former MPs suggest MPs still rely on visits to local coffee shops or community events to hear from constituents. Though in-person connections are important, a good website provides an ongoing way to reach citizens.

"The good news is that websites can be changed quickly and with relative ease compared to consultations or other forms of encouraging participation. New Members of Parliament should be able to hit the ground running, with a site that encourages political participation," says Jane Hilderman, Samara's Research Manager.

See the complete analysis, an infographic of the results and top website tips for elected officials at <http://www.samaracanada.com/fun-stuff/members-of-parliament-websites-infographic/>

Methodology

In August and September 2013, members of the Samara team located and visited every Member of Parliament's site (except the leaders and the four then-empty seats). Each site was rated against 14 criteria, including the presence of a biography, hours of operation, and whether the MP described his or her work in Ottawa and in the riding. The sites were also rated on how they built connections with the public: whether they offered a newsletter, space for discussion, petitions/polls, and whether they linked to their social media. (See the [Methodology page](#) for more detail).

Other findings include:

- MPs' websites, on average, include 7 out of 14 items on the checklist
- Only three websites checked off 12 items, and none encompassed all 14.
- There was some variation among the parties: Independents scored the highest at 8; Conservatives (6.9), Liberals (7.2) and NDP (7.8) all scored around the average; and the Bloc MPs received the lowest rating of 6/14.

About Samara

Samara is a charitable organization dedicated to improving political participation in Canada. Through research and educational programs, Samara reconnects citizens to politics.

Samara's areas of research include:

- Citizen participation and voting behaviour
- Citizens' attitudes towards politics
- Members of Parliament
- Political parties
- Political journalism and writing

Our research and information on our programs can be found at www.samaracanada.com. **We are always available to comment on our areas of research.** You can also follow Samara on Twitter @SamaraCda.