

EMBARGOED until March 28th, 2017

To request an advance copy of the report or arrange an interview with Jane Hilderman, please contact:

José Ramón Martí, 416-960-7934 (o), 647-822-1731 (m), jose.marti@samaracanada.com

Canada's democracy awarded "B-" in second Democracy 360 report card

Improvement from "C" in 2015 driven by increased voter turnout, modestly improved grades for MPs and parties

Toronto, March 28, 2017— Samara Canada, a national not-for-profit research organization, is releasing its latest made-in-Canada report card on the state of this country's democracy.

Much has changed since the first Democracy 360 report was issued in 2015, both in Canada and around the world. At home, a federal election brought a new party to power, while internationally, there has been considerable political destabilization in many countries, and much concern expressed about the nature of democratic engagement and discourse. Asking Canadians about the health of their democracy has never been more important, and so the new report card is especially timely and relevant.

Based on the understanding that democracy is about more than just casting a ballot every four years, Samara's Democracy 360 examines the complex relationship between citizens and political leadership, focusing on how they interact between elections. The 19 indicators and 38 sub-indicators that make up the grade provide a more comprehensive picture than ever before of how Canadians talk, act and lead in politics.

"Canada is seen internationally as an example of a vibrant and well-functioning democracy," says Jane Hilderman, Executive Director of Samara Canada. "However, these grades tell us that there's still room for much improvement. Given recent events around the world, Canadians have reason to remain vigilant, avoid complacency, and redouble their efforts to strengthen their own democracy and engage more fully with it."

The second edition of the Democracy 360 report will be available at 12:01 AM on Tuesday, March 28th, 2017, at samaracanada.com/democracy-360.

KEY FINDINGS

There is some encouraging news in the report, alongside some causes for concern.

- Canada's democracy earned a B-, an improvement from its C two years ago.
- Two-way communication between Canadians and their leaders increased.
- At 68%, voter turnout was up 7 percentage points, the highest since 1993.
- Voter turnout among younger Canadians was up sharply to 57%: an astounding 18% increase for 18-24 year olds and an impressive 12% for 25-34 year olds.
- However, citizen participation in the daily life of democracy in ways other than casting a ballot (e.g. joining a party, donating to a campaign) remained disturbingly low.
- Trust in MPs and parties went up modestly, but still remains below 50%.
- Canadians awarded barely passing grades to MPs and political parties on performance at doing their core jobs.

- Diversity of representation in the House of Commons continues to be a challenge, with young people and women still significantly under-represented. Visible minorities and First Nations are closer to achieving proportionate representation in Parliament.
- Differences are apparent across the country with Albertans and Quebecers least satisfied with democracy and those from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Atlantic provinces the most satisfied.

“While voter turnout increased an unprecedented amount in 2015, there was no associated bump in Canadians engaging regularly with politics,” Hilderman continues. “The daily work of politics is still left to a few. A diverse and dispersed power base is important to a strong democracy.”

At the end of the report card, Samara identifies five ways in which Canada could and should invest in its democratic infrastructure – all of which the organization has been suggesting:

- 1) Invest in civic education, in and beyond the classroom
- 2) Improve MPs’ capacity to engage in meaningful consultation with the public
- 3) Increase civility in political discourse
- 4) Empower elected representatives
- 5) Increase diversity in representation

To watch Jane Hilderman discuss these improvements to our democratic infrastructure, go to <https://youtu.be/rt0t69enZ-Y>.

About Samara’s Democracy 360

Samara’s Democracy 360 is a made-in-Canada report card that grades key areas of Canada’s democracy. By giving citizens greater insight into the health of their democracy, the report card’s goals are to increase awareness and understanding, encourage discussion and debate, promote action and engagement, and, ultimately, lead to positive change.

The Democracy 360 measures the relationship between citizens and their political leadership by looking at three areas:

- **Communication:** How do MPs and political parties reach out to Canadians? Are Canadians discussing politics or contacting their political leaders?
- **Participation:** How do Canadians participate in public life? What political activities are they engaging in?
- **Leadership:** How do Canadians evaluate MPs and political parties on their core roles as leaders? How well do our elected leaders represent the diversity of Canadians?

The Democracy 360 focuses primarily on federal politics, political parties and MPs, as well as citizens’ engagement and perceptions of politics more generally.

In addition to national results, breakdowns are available for six regions of Canada:

- Atlantic
- Quebec
- Ontario
- Manitoba/Saskatchewan
- Alberta
- British Columbia

To see the full methodology, please contact José Ramón Martí at jose.marti@samaracanada.com.

About Samara Canada

Samara Canada is dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy by reconnecting citizens to politics. Since its founding in 2007, Samara has become a trusted, non-partisan champion of increased civic engagement and a more positive public life. As an educational charity, we write research reports; hold public events and digital engagement opportunities; and speak to media, decision makers and non-profits leaders. We also put our research to work by giving teachers and professors the tools to encourage democratic engagement.

More information on Samara's activities is available at samaracanada.com. Follow us on Twitter at @SamaraCda.