

EMBARGOED until 12:01am, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018

To request an advance copy of the report or set up an interview, please contact:  
José Ramón Martí, 416-960-7927 (o), 647-822-1731 (m), jose.marti@samaracanada.com

## ***Former Members of Parliament report feeling more powerless than previous parliaments***

***MP asks: “Why don’t we just send in a transcript and save us all the trouble?”***

Toronto, June 12, 2017—Trust in democratic institutions has been declining for decades, but recently the world has seen how this trend can be mobilized to do lasting damage when elected leaders use that lack of trust for their own gain.

Elected representatives are critical to building trust with citizens. But in recent decades, Members of Parliament have been drifting away from the work required of them—of legislation, representation, and scrutiny. According to new research by the Samara Centre for Democracy, the problem is only getting worse, as MPs continue to drift further away from this essential work.

Since 2011, Samara has performed over 134 Exit Interviews with Members of Parliament, the first and only example of this practice. In 2014, Samara released a book based on this ground-breaking research, the #1 National Bestseller *Tragedy in the Commons*.

Most recently, Samara interviewed 54 former MPs who sat in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament. They tell a story of overbearing party leaders and their staff, and, worryingly, they report an even further loss of agency for Canadians’ representatives.

### **Key findings**

- The dominance of party leaders and partisanship pervades areas of Parliament where constructive work used to happen.
- In committees, where MPs are supposed to work freely across party lines, work is scripted and choreographed. Former MPs describe committees as busy work, and a waste of time.
- Parties use their control over committee membership to manage the caucus and punish dissent.
- Former MPs report a spike in partisan conflict over the control of time in Parliament, which has the effect of limiting debate and poisoning the atmosphere.
- Private Members’ Bills are seen by some former MPs as empty exercises.
- While many of these problems were particularly evident in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, they are long-term problems which have not been fully addressed in the current Parliament.



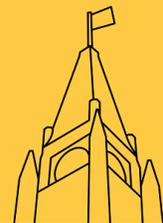
*Flip the Script* is the first in a series of three reports that will make a case for MPs who are independent and empowered, thoughtful and engaged in three environments: Parliament, the constituency, and the party. The report also explores reform methods.

“To achieve this vision, institutional change is required to empower MPs,” says Jane Hilderman, Samara’s Executive Director. “This report recommends that reform start in committees, and examines the role of Private Members’ Business and parliamentary scrutiny in sketching a path toward the independent and empowered, thoughtful and engaged representatives our system needs.”

Please contact José Ramón Martí if you would like to receive an embargoed copy of *Flip the Script: Reclaiming the legislature to reinvigorate representative democracy*.

The full report will be available at 12:01 a.m. on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at:  
[samaracanada.com/flip-the-script](http://samaracanada.com/flip-the-script)

La version française sera disponible ici:  
[samaracanada.com/fr/laisser-tomber-le-scenario](http://samaracanada.com/fr/laisser-tomber-le-scenario)



## About Samara’s MP Exit Interviews Project

From 2008 to 2011, the Samara Centre for Democracy conducted the first-ever systematic series of exit interviews with former Members of Parliament. In total, 80 interviews took place in the homes and communities of former MPs who sat in the 38<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Parliaments (2004-2011). The discussions formed the basis of a series of research reports and the bestselling book *Tragedy in the Commons*.

Last year, Samara again reached out to past representatives, this time to MPs who had sat in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament (2011-2015) and who resigned or were defeated in the 2015 general election. We wanted to understand if the MPs’ roles were changing—for better or worse. This research produced more than 100 hours of interviews with 54 MPs representing all parties and all parts of the country.

## About the Samara Centre for Democracy

The Samara Centre for Democracy (formerly Samara Canada) is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada’s democracy, making it more accessible, responsive, and inclusive. Samara produces action-based research—as well as tools and resources for active citizens and public leaders—designed to engage Canadians in their democracy.

To learn more about how our research and educational programming is building better politics and a better Canada, visit [samaracanada.com](http://samaracanada.com).

