

EMBARGOED until March 26th, 2019

To request an advance copy of the report card or to arrange an interview, please contact:

José Ramón Martí, 647-822-1731, jose.marti@samaracanada.com

Canada's democracy earns a "B-" in third Democracy 360 report card

Canadians largely satisfied with their democracy, but growing fearful for its future

Toronto, March 26, 2019—National, non-partisan charity the Samara Centre for Democracy is issuing its third biennial report card on the state of Canadian democracy. Amid global uncertainty about the fate of long-standing democracies, Canada's democracy has earned a "B-" in 2019, the same grade it was last awarded in 2017.

Since the Samara Centre began measuring five years ago, Canadians' satisfaction with the way Canada's democracy works has never been higher. Three-quarters of Canadians are "very" or "fairly" satisfied with the state of affairs. They're more interested in politics, they're talking about it more, and they're reaching out more to their elected representatives.

In contrast to other studies which have found surprising levels of support in Canada for non-democratic forms of government, the vast majority of Canadians (95%) find it "very" or "rather" important to live in a democratic country.

However, this positive story masks a deep concern with the direction Canada's democracy is heading. Compared to two years ago, Canadians are much more likely to say our democracy is becoming weaker than stronger, with nearly half of respondents (46%) describing it as getting weaker.

"Given Canadians' concerns about the future of our democracy," notes Dr. Michael Morden, Research Director at the Samara Centre, "it's important that we avoid feeling a sense of complacency, and instead work towards fostering a democracy that is more resilient and inclusive, founded on meaningful citizen engagement and responsive governance."

A significantly greater number of Canadians are discussing politics and reaching out to their elected representatives. On the other hand, they report that Members of Parliament are not contacting them as much as they have in the past.

Canadians are participating slightly more in formal politics, and engaging in activism at rates similar to previous years. Troublingly, rates of broader civic and community engagement have dropped significantly.

Since 2017, there has been little change in the public's opinion of how well MPs and federal political parties are doing their jobs, although there is growing trust in MPs and in the belief that their work can influence our country's direction. However, since the first report card in 2015, MPs and political

parties are viewed much more favourably. In terms of how well our elected representatives reflect society, the House of Commons is not keeping up with the changing Canadian population.

At the end of the report card, the Samara Centre identifies three ways in which Canada can and should endeavor to build a more vibrant and representative democracy:

- **Strengthen individual and collective democratic skills and habits** by supporting civic literacy for all ages.
- **Equip governing institutions for better decision-making** by empowering elected representatives to exert greater individual influence over the legislative process.
- **Make elections a moment for genuine deliberation** by demanding transparency, civility, and openness from our political parties and candidates, and guarding against disinformation campaigns aimed at manipulating and distorting public discussion.

“When it comes to our politics, Canadians are increasingly satisfied, interested, and engaged, but there are still many ways in which our democracy is failing to meet its potential,” says Kendall Anderson, Acting Executive Director of the Samara Centre. “The upcoming federal election provides a unique opportunity for MPs and parties to consult meaningfully with constituents, and to invite Canadians from all walks of life to participate more fully in our democracy, both on Election Day and beyond.”

**The third edition of the Democracy 360 will be available
at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, March 26th, 2019, at:
samaracanada.com/democracy-360**

About the Samara Centre’s Democracy 360

The Samara Centre’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?
- **Political 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 the Samara Centre for Democracy

The Samara Centre for Democracy (formerly Samara Canada) is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy. The Samara Centre produces innovative, action-oriented research that illuminates the evidence and reforms needed to make Canadian politics more accessible, responsive, and inclusive. Through original engagement programming, we provide active citizens and public leaders with tools and resources designed to engage Canadians in their democracy.

To learn more about how our research and engagement programming is building a stronger democracy and a better Canada, visit samaracanada.com.