

**HOUSE
INSPECTION
A RETROSPECTIVE
OF THE 42ND
PARLIAMENT**

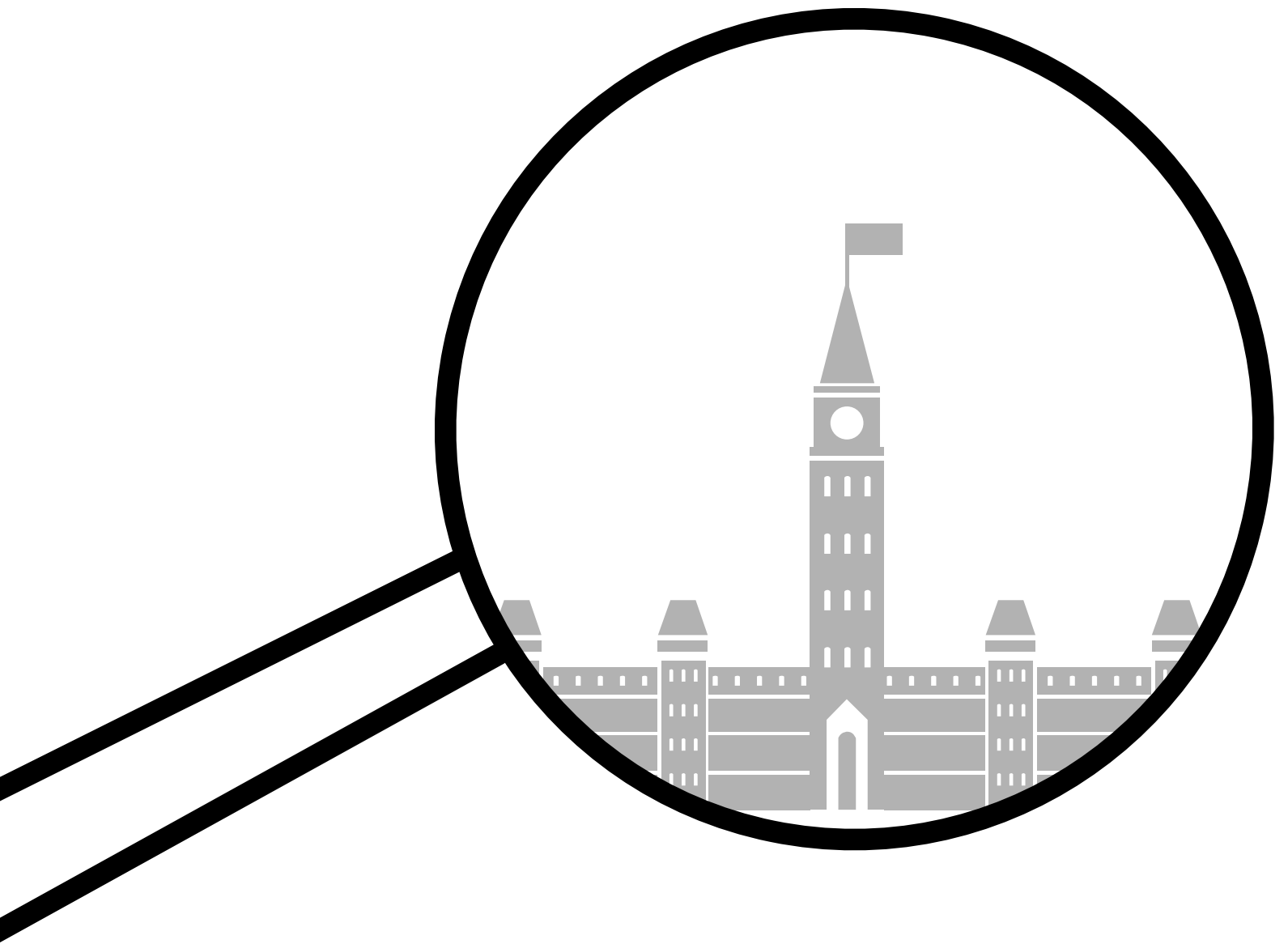


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Executive summary

After the experience of a bruising election campaign, a new Parliament is a chance for a fresh start. For new Members of Parliament (MPs), taking their seat in the House of Commons is powerful, emotional, and memorable.

But the day-to-day of parliamentary life doesn't always match these lofty first impressions. So while a new Parliament is a time to look forward, it is also useful to look back to recognize what was achieved

in previous Parliaments and to learn from what went wrong. This report conducts the first in-depth, objective examination of the 42nd Parliament (2015-2019), based on three dimensions of an effective Parliament: high-quality scrutiny of Government, healthy partisanship within and between parties, and civil and constructive debate. Compared to previous Parliaments, the data shows:

Key findings



They like big bills

Despite criticism of omnibus bills, the Government continued to introduce ever-larger bills, which can make serious scrutiny hard.



Time (allocation) after time (allocation)

The Government continued a much-criticized practice of frequently shutting down debate through time allocation.



More tinkering

Parliament spent more time studying Government bills, and amended more bills, largely due to the Senate's new assertiveness in considering bills and challenging the Government and House of Commons.



Herd behaviour

The average MP voted with their party 99.6% of the time. The most rebellious MP in the 42nd Parliament: 96.6%.



More collaboration, but things fell apart

Committees more often reached consensus across party lines. But according to MPs, cross-party collaboration declined over the course of the Parliament as unhealthy partisanship increased.



Trash talk

MPs see debate as empty, repetitive, and a waste of valuable time. Despite efforts to promote civility in the House, heckling did not decrease in the 42nd Parliament.

The report concludes with recommendations from MPs for the new Parliament to:

- **Exercise diligent scrutiny** by getting into the weeds of Government documents and using all the available resources.
- **Overcome toxic partisanship** by getting to know colleagues across the aisle, and demonstrating principled independence within the party.
- **Strive for better, more substantive and civil debate**, with less note-reading, less heckling, and more dynamic exchanges.

Where did we get this information?

The Samara Centre used a variety of sources to compile the information in this report. For example, we dug into Hansard (Parliament's written record) to count heckling; scraped data from the LEGISinfo online parliamentary website to look at bills and how they progressed through Parliament; and used the Library of Parliament's database to calculate the number of sitting days.

Special thanks is due to Jean-François Godbout from the Université de Montréal, who compiled and analyzed voting records of all MPs who sat in the

42nd Parliament.

Additionally, we used results from Samara Centre surveys of sitting MPs conducted throughout the 42nd Parliament. For the past three years, the Samara Centre for Democracy has surveyed sitting MPs on their experiences. Every year, between 20% and 30% of MPs take the opportunity to report on their life in the House, their concerns about the way politics is practiced, and changes they would like to see.

See page 25 for the complete methodology.



Careful scrutiny of Government

The most ancient responsibility of parliamentarians is to carefully watch the Government—how it spends money, makes law, and generally behaves itself.

Good scrutiny takes time. For a small portion of bills—like those that relate to paying people or fixing urgent legal loopholes—time is of the essence, and Parliament is expected to pass law.

However, in most cases, Parliament is meant to slow down the passing of legislation, to ensure decisions are made with democratic legitimacy and appropriate reflection. For example, hearings with witnesses during committee stages of a bill makes it possible to hear from experts and stakeholders, and amend the text to improve bills before they become law.

The Samara Centre looked at the following measures for perspective on the ability of the 42nd Parliament to scrutinize Government:

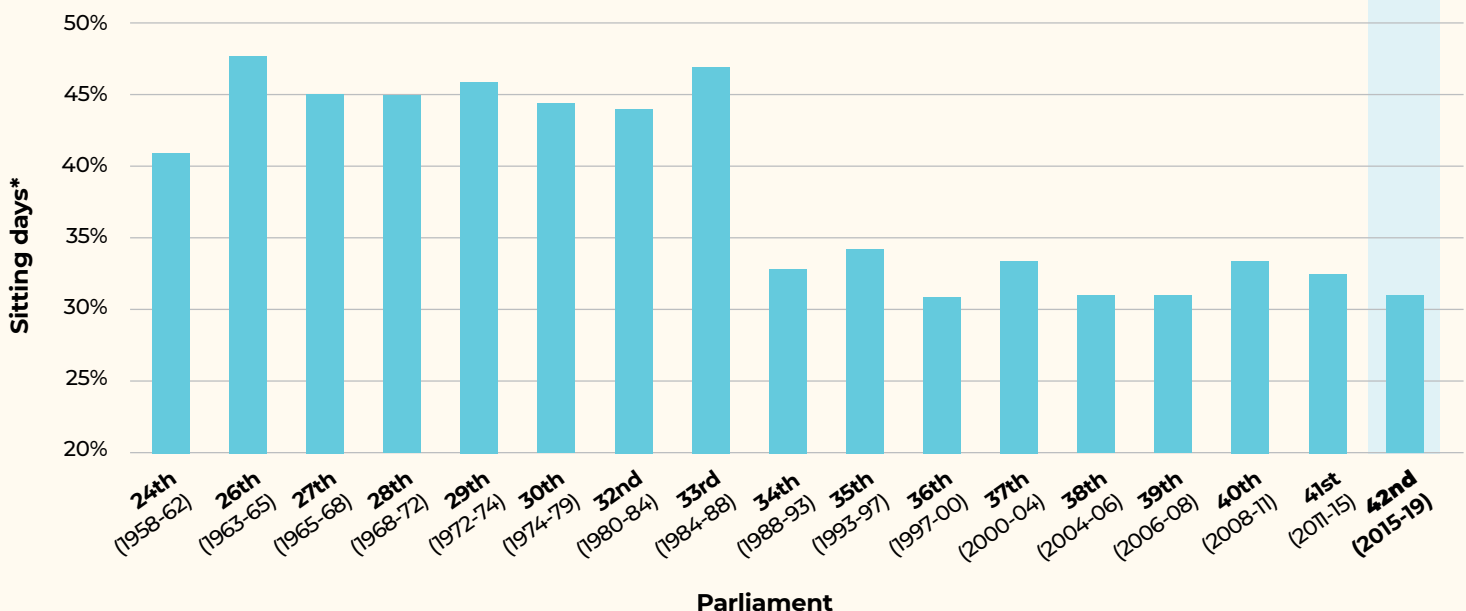
→ How often did MPs sit?

- How often was time allocation used to shut down debate?
- How much time did parliamentarians spend scrutinizing bills?
- How many bills were passed and amended?
- How long were the bills?

How often did MPs sit?

For the House of Commons to provide legislative oversight, it must be sitting, but the 42nd Parliament is the latest in a longer-term trend of the House of Commons sitting for only around one-third of the year—a decline from past decades. In the 29th Parliament (1972-1974), for example, the Commons sat 46% of the time, almost half the year; in the 42nd Parliament (2015-2019), it sat only 31% of the time.

How often did the House of Commons meet?



Note: Excludes Parliaments lasting less than one year.

*House of Commons sitting days as a proportion of the period from election day until the date of dissolution for the next election.

How often was time allocation used?

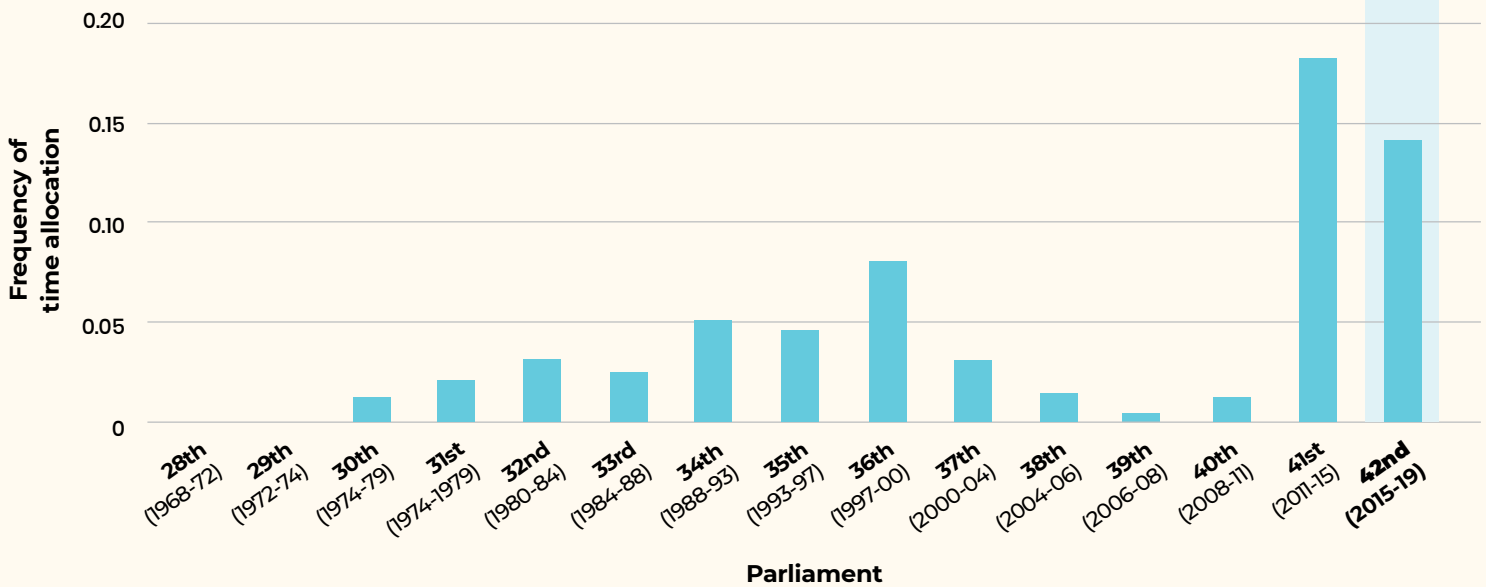
When Parliament was in session, there was significant conflict over the use of time. Debates on Government legislation continue as long as MPs rise to speak on the issue. To ensure debates proceed efficiently and to allow MPs to know when each bill will be debated, the House Leaders from the Government and the opposition parties meet regularly to allot parliamentary time based on the number of MPs from each party who want to take part. However, such planning can break

down if one or more opposition parties wants to delay a bill or the Government wants to pass it quickly.

Time allocation is a tool available to the Government to limit debate on Government bills. It occurs when the Government passes a motion to restrict how much more time will be spent debating a bill.

Historically, time allocation was used sparingly. However, in the last two Parliaments, its use has spiked. Something has gone wrong: parties aren't able to cooperate on managing parliamentary time.

How often was time allocation used?



Why the delay tactics?

When the governing party holds the majority of seats, winning the votes for new Government spending and legislation is a foregone conclusion. As a result, tactics like filibusters or forcing marathon sessions of recorded votes is one of the few tools that opposition and backbench MPs can use to delay votes and

draw public attention to their concerns, and possibly to force the Government to make changes. Knowing this, successive Governments developed the tool of time allocation to limit parliamentary debates on new legislation.

How much time did parliamentarians spend scrutinizing bills?

Nevertheless, there are indications of significant increases in legislative scrutiny in the past two Parliaments.

For example, the amount of time the House of Commons takes to consider successful Government bills has risen by more than 50% since the 39th Parliament. The increase in the average days of consideration

in the Senate is even larger. On average, senators in the 42nd Parliament took over twice as long to pass Government bills than in the 39th.

In total, Government bills took much longer to pass through Parliament—around 11 months on average in the 42nd Parliament, compared to less than six months in the 39th Parliament.

Time required to pass Government legislation				
Parliament	39th (2006-08)*	40th (2008-11)*	41st (2011-15)	42nd (2015-19)
Average days consideration in the House of Commons	7.5	6.4	10.2	11.9
Average days consideration in the Senate	6.1	6.0	8.8	15.0
Average calendar days (from first reading to Royal Assent)	172	139	237	331

Note: Figures exclude appropriation bills. House of Commons and Senate averages include both consideration in the chamber and in committees.

*Minority government

How many bills were passed and amended?

The result: some signs of legislative life. The 42nd Parliament amended almost 50% more Government legislation than in the previous Parliament, and notably more than in the 39th and 40th as well. Nearly two-thirds of Government bills were changed in some way before they were passed.

Seventy Government bills were passed in the 42nd Parliament, compared with 100 in the 41st Parliament. In fact, the number of Government bills passed during

the majority 42nd Parliament was closer to that from 39th and 40th Parliaments, both minorities which lasted for much shorter periods. The 42nd Parliament also saw far fewer Government bills introduced. Legislators in the 42nd Parliament took advantage of the less crowded legislative schedule to amend more bills before they were passed, with the proportion of Government bills amended being higher than even during the recent minority Parliaments.

Amendments to Government bills					
Parliament	38th (2004-05)*	39th (2006-08)*	40th (2008-11)*	41st (2011-15)	42nd (2015-19)
Length of Parliament (in days)	518	958	883	1,555	1,423
Government bills introduced	87	111	131	132	88
Government bills passed	48 (55%)	59 (53%)	56 (43%)	100 (76%)	70 (80%)
Government bills amended during passage	60%	51%	50%	42%	64%

Note: Figures exclude appropriation bills.

*Minority government

Senate awakens

The new assertiveness of the Senate is one of the defining features of the 42nd Parliament. This confidence was driven by institutional change. Since Confederation, senators were generally aligned with a political party, and were appointed primarily based on their partisan affiliations. But beginning in 2014, things began to change. In January of that year, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau removed Liberal senators from the party caucus. The Liberal party campaigned on the idea of a non-partisan Senate in the 2015 election, and after forming government, created a new independent advisory board to review and recommend senators for appointment. While some senators continued to sit with their previous party affiliations, several partisan senators also chose to give up their party ties and joined the new independent senators appointed by Trudeau. This made the Independent Senator's Group the largest block of senators.

The freshly constituted Senate demonstrated much greater willingness to challenge the Government and the House of Commons. In the 42nd Parliament, the Senate:

- Spent over 60% longer considering Government bills than in the 41st Parliament.
- Amended or influenced the final text of 27 Government bills, compared with eight bills in the 41st Parliament.
- Allowed one Government bill to die in the Senate, up from none in the 41st Parliament.
- Failed to pass 15 of the 25 Private Members' Bills that passed the House of Commons, a massive proportional increase from the 41st

Parliament when only eight of the 42 Private Members' Bills that reached the Senate failed to receive Royal Assent.

While the new Senate is contributing to more legislative scrutiny, it is also changing the relationship between the Senate and the House of Commons. This will likely stir up an old debate about the extent to which the appointed Senate can legitimately thwart the will of the elected House of Commons.

There's also a danger that deliberation in the Senate could come at the expense of deliberation in the House of Commons. If the Government is worried that the Senate will take extra time to review bills, it may curtail debate in the House of Commons, or make greater use of omnibus bills, in order to ensure its work gets through Parliament. To its credit, the Senate has attempted to minimize the impact of its increased scrutiny by sending complicated pieces of legislation to multiple committees at the same time—a kind of legislative parallel processing.

Nonetheless, an increasingly assertive Senate will have a profound impact on the effectiveness of the House of Commons. Getting to a stable new normal in the relationship between the Commons and Senate should be a priority in the 43rd Parliament.

How long were the bills?

The Harper Government faced criticism for its use of so-called “**omnibus bills**”—large, complex pieces of legislation accomplishing a range of only loosely connected goals which were therefore hard for parliamentarians to seriously examine before passing. That criticism has continued under the Trudeau Government. For instance, the 392-page Bill C-97, introduced by the Trudeau Government in 2019, was considered an omnibus bill because of its length and because it changed the laws on a wide range of disconnected issues,

including refugee claims, the borders of national parks, and the regulation of therapeutic products.

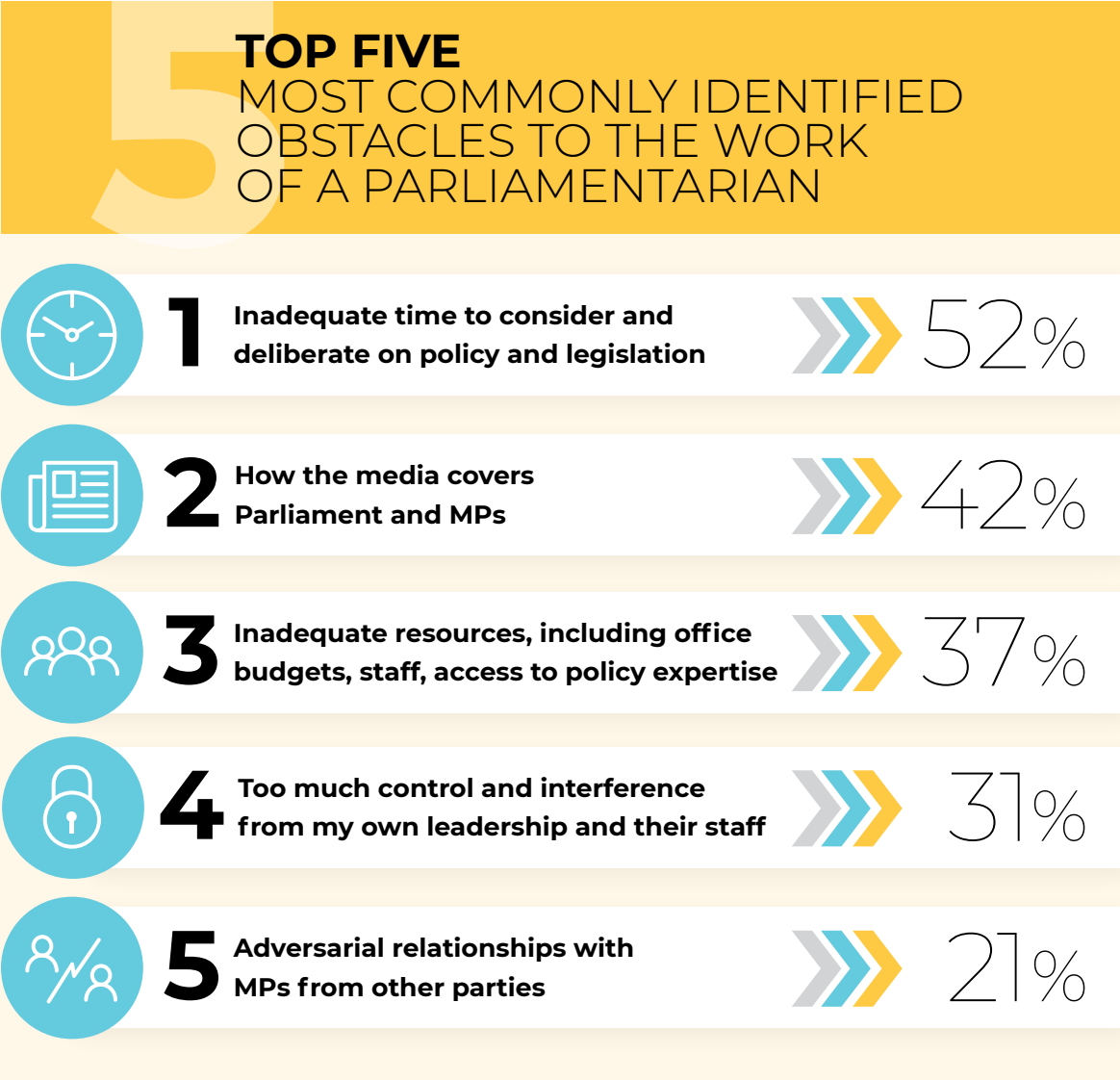
What constitutes an omnibus bill is somewhat subjective, and is not solely a matter of length. But it’s still striking that in the 42nd Parliament the average size of a Government bill grew again, by nearly 10%. In fact, the average size of a Government bill has more than doubled from the 38th to the 42nd Parliament. Nearly a quarter of Government bills were over 100 pages in the 42nd Parliament, up from less than one in 10 in the 38th.

Length of Government bills					
Parliament	38th (2004-05)*	39th (2006-08)*	40th (2008-11)*	41st (2011-15)	42nd (2015-19)
Average length of Government bill (in pages)	38	50	45	72	79
Longest Government bill (in pages)	286	568	902	962	884
Government bills over 100 pages	9.2%	12.6%	7.6%	20%	23%
Government bills under 50 pages	76%	71%	77%	62%	63%

Note: Figures exclude appropriation bills.

*Minority government

With the House of Commons sitting for less than one-third of the year, the frequent use of time allocation, and bills becoming longer, it's no surprise that MPs still named "inadequate time" as the number one obstacle to doing their work as parliamentarians.



N=98

Source: Samara Centre 2018 MP Survey (MPs could select up to three obstacles from a menu of options)



Healthy partisanship

Parliament is meant to be a partisan space. Along with simplifying voters' choices at election time, parties structure Parliament, and ensure there is both a Government and an Opposition to hold it to account.

But a prevailing theme of the Samara Centre's research with MPs is that unhealthy partisanship has pervaded Parliament. Unhealthy partisanship is a combination of polarization and hostility toward members of other parties, and protective and uncritical uniformity among members of the same party. Outside the party, unhealthy partisanship makes cooperation across parties impossible. Within the party, unhealthy partisanship turns caucuses, which are meant to deliberate and hold leaders to account, into instruments of the leader and their staff.

What did partisanship look like in the 42nd Parliament? To examine the question, the Samara Centre asked:

- How often did MPs vote with their parties?
- How often did committees produce cross-partisan cooperation?
- How did MPs evaluate partisanship over the course of the 42nd Parliament, including within their own parties?











How often did MPs vote with their parties?

The last Parliament was typical of modern Canadian Parliaments in one respect: MPs voted with their parties at almost every opportunity. Data collected and analyzed by political scientist Jean-François Godbout demonstrates just how rare it was for MPs to cast a vote in dissent from their party position.

On average, an MP participated in close to 1,000 votes over the course of the 42nd Parliament. The data finds that the average MP voted with their parties an amazing **99.6%** of the time. That loyalty rate may be modestly inflated, given Opposition-forced voting marathons which generated numerous recorded votes as a protest tactic. Nevertheless: Eighty percent of MPs cast five or fewer dissenting votes over the course of the Parliament. Forty-three MPs voted with their party a perfect 100% of the time.

THE REBELS:

THE MOST INDEPENDENT MPs IN THE LAST PARLIAMENT, BASED ON THE NUMBER OF TIMES THAT THEY VOTED AGAINST THEIR PARTY'S POSITION, WERE:

	Member of Parliament		Number of dissenting votes (Percentage of total votes cast)
	1 Nathaniel Erskine-Smith		37 (3.4%)
	2 Robert-Falcon Ouellette		21 (1.8%)
	3 Sylvie Boucher		14 (1.5%)
	4 Michael Chong		13 (1.6%)
	5 Peter Kent		13 (1.3%)

Very honourable mention: Though he passed away in 2017, Arnold Chan (Liberal) cast 11 dissenting votes during his time in the 42nd Parliament, achieving the highest rate of independence (3.7%).

Got it from our mother (of Parliaments)?

Party discipline is a feature of most parliaments, and all Westminster Parliaments. Nevertheless, the Canadian experience is extreme. For example, there is significantly less party discipline in the UK Parliament. Even before the uniquely tumultuous period of a coalition government and conflict over Brexit, British

MPs were notably more rebellious than Canadian MPs. For example, during the 2005-2010 Parliament, 36 British MPs voted differently than the majority of their party members on more than 5% of votes (compared with none in Canada), and 15 voted differently on more than 10% of votes.

Source: The Public Whip, www.publicwhip.org.uk.

Did committees facilitate cooperation?

Away from the main chamber, committees—small groups of MPs who study particular areas of Government policy or activity—offer space to work with colleagues from other parties. Seats on committees are distributed proportionally among recognized parties, and committees do not take direction from the Government nor report to it. In theory, they provide a chance for MPs to work closely with members of other parties and reach consensus away from the high politics of the moment. But in exit interviews with the Samara Centre, former MPs report that this is happening less than it used to.

Yet evidence suggests cross-partisan committees were, in fact, more active and cooperative in the 42nd Parliament. Committees initiated far more independent studies than in the previous Parliament. When they reported on those studies, committees were also able to reach consensus among the parties significantly more often.

While most committees were able to reach consensus often on self-initiated studies, the closer they came to spotlight politics, the harder that became. The committees which saw dissent on most of their self-initiated studies include Citizenship and Immigration (dissenting positions on nine of 12 reports) and Environment and Sustainable Development (four of seven reports). These are polarized issue areas in Canadian society, making reaching committee consensus harder, but arguably more important.

How did MPs evaluate the state of partisanship?

Before the 2019 election, the Samara Centre asked sitting MPs to reflect on what changes they had witnessed over the course of the 42nd Parliament, including how the party conducted itself internally, and how Members worked across party lines.

MPs saw little change to dynamics within their parties, though more than a third reported more debate within caucus.

Committee reports		
Parliament	41st (2011-15)	42nd (2015-19)
Total self-initiated reports	138	282
Completely unanimous reports (no supplementary or dissenting positions from one or more parties)	27%	57%
Reports with supplementary positions (from one or more parties)	52%	30%
Reports with dissenting positions (from one or more parties)	36%	20%

MPs' evaluation of how their own parties changed during the 42nd Parliament

	Became less or much less prevalent	Stayed about the same	Became more or much more prevalent	Don't know
Party leaders and whips disciplining MPs	17%	50%	23%	11%
MPs rebelling against the direction of party leaders and staff	20%	44%	25%	11%
Open debate within caucus	14%	43%	37%	6%

N=66

Source: Samara Centre 2019 MP Survey

Yet many MPs observed changes in the relationship between parties, including hardening partisanship, angry polarization, and lost opportunities for collaboration—a reminder of how an initial openness to cooperation can disappear.

MPs' evaluation of how the 42nd Parliament changed

	Became less or much less prevalent	Stayed about the same	Became more or much more prevalent	Don't know
Cross-party collaboration	45%	35%	12%	8%
Incivility	5%	33%	55%	8%
Unhealthy partisanship	9%	29%	55%	8%
Use of populist rhetoric by MPs	5%	28%	57%	11%

N=66

Source: Samara Centre 2019 MP Survey



Civility and meaningful debate

Parliament is supposed to be responsive to and reflective of public opinion in Canada, and channel differences toward frank but constructive debate.

However, the state of debate consistently arises in the Samara Centre's exit interviews with MPs as one of the most frustrating and dysfunctional elements of an MP's work in Parliament.

Was the 42nd Parliament any different? The Samara Centre asked:

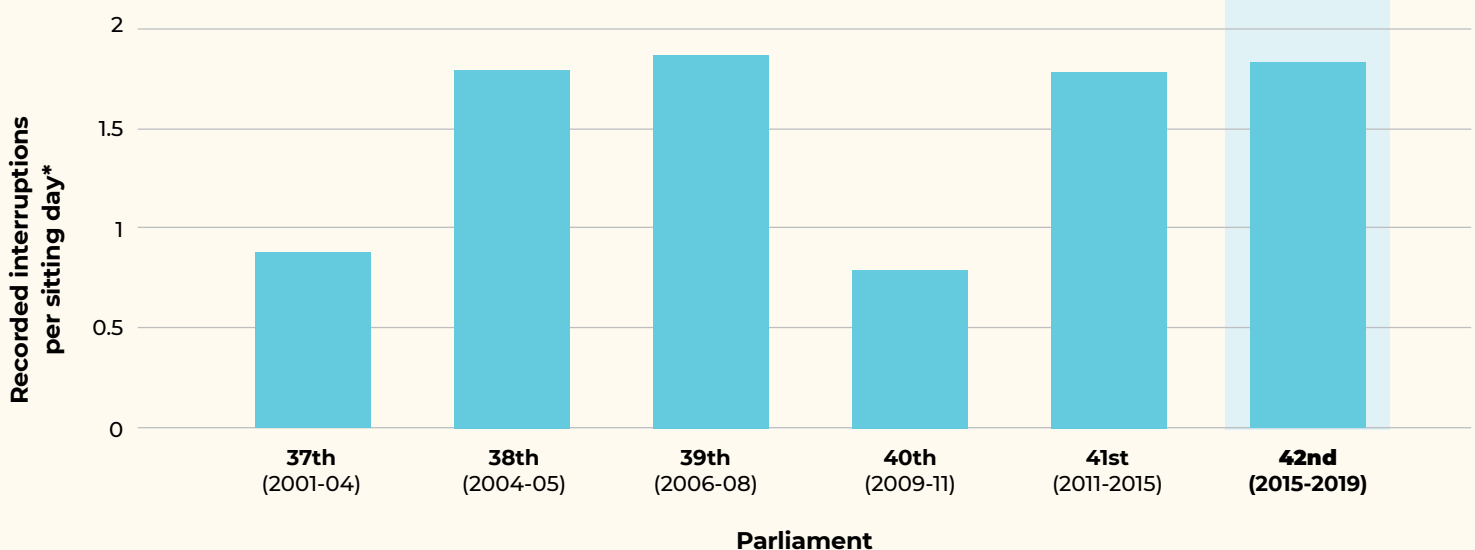
- Did rates of heckling change?
- How did MPs feel about heckling?
- Did MPs feel debate in the House of Commons was thoughtful and constructive?

Did rates of heckling change?

In the report [No One Is Listening](#), the Samara Centre defined heckling as "calling out in the Chamber of the House of Commons without having the Speaker's recognition to speak." Some defend heckling as an important parliamentary tradition, and indeed, humorous and well-meant heckling can be harmless. But in the Canadian Parliament, heckling is usually humourless, dull, and disruptive. It can also represent far darker harassment, at times along gendered lines.

Despite efforts by the Speaker of the House of Commons to enforce decorum, heckling levels in the 42nd Parliament were consistent with recent Parliaments.

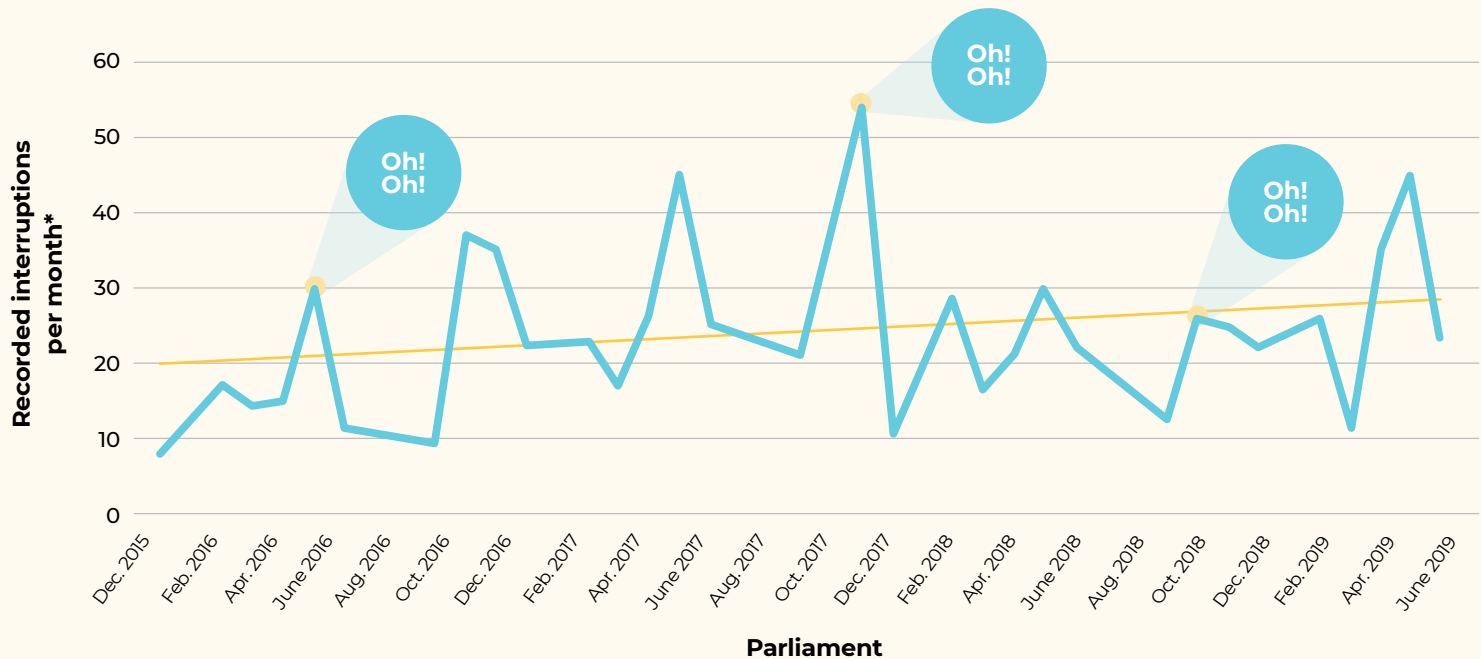
What was the heckling rate in recent Parliaments?



*Interruptions and interjections in the House of Commons are recorded in Hansard, the written record of Parliament, as "Oh, oh." The Samara Centre uses instances of "Oh, oh" as a proxy measure for heckling.

There was a modest increase in heckling over the course of the 42nd Parliament, though the middle period saw the most raucous sittings.

How did heckling change over the course of the 42nd Parliament?



Note: Data points for months with no or few sittings are excluded.

*Interruptions and interjections in the House of Commons are recorded in Hansard, the written record of Parliament, as "Oh, oh." The Samara Centre uses instances of "Oh, oh" as a proxy measure for heckling.

How did MPs feel about heckling?

Why is incivility in the Commons so challenging to reign in? It's still a puzzle. MPs don't like heckling, but they do it.

- **65%** of MPs admit to heckling.
- **53%** of MPs say heckling is a problem.
- **Three-quarters** of MPs believe the public thinks badly of heckling.
- **36%** of MPs see heckling as a form of harassment.
- **67%** of female MPs say they've heard gendered heckling, versus only **20%** of male MPs.

N=81
Source: Samara Centre 2017 MP Survey

Did MPs feel debate in the House of Commons was thoughtful and constructive?

The hours set aside for speeches are meant to serve a public purpose: to make the case for or against Government action, to educate the public about what legislation is on the table, and to illuminate differences between parties and highlight alternative paths.

Was it time well-spent? According to MPs in the 42nd Parliament: nope.

When asked to evaluate different aspects of the performance of the House of Commons, MPs gave the worst grades to debates.

MPs' dissatisfaction with the performance of the House of Commons and its Members

	Unsatisfied/ Very Unsatisfied
Thoughtful and civil debate, featuring meaningful exchanges of views	65%
Collaboration across party lines	51%
Thoughtful scrutiny of government policy, spending, and legislation	50%
Productive and independent committee work	27%
Parliament's openness, accountability, transparency	26%
Open, participatory discussions and decision-making within the party caucus	24%

N=98

Source: Samara Centre 2019 MP Survey

MPs were also least likely to feel empowered debating in the main chamber.

Where MPs feel most empowered to have an impact on government policy and legislation

In committee work	67%
Through direct discussions with Ministers	52%
In national caucus discussions	51%
In regional or issue-based caucus discussions	35%
Through advancing your own Private Members' Bills and Motions	28%
Through direct discussions with your party leader	15%
In informal social settings with other Members	12%
During Question Period	10%
In parliamentary associations or all-party caucuses	7%
During debates	6%

N=98

Source: Samara Centre 2018 MP Survey (MPs could select up to three options)

All those ill-spent hours come at a cost. Given possible reasons why they may feel they don't have enough time to scrutinize policy and legislation, MPs most often chose wasting time on scripted speeches.

TOP FIVE REASONS MPs DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO CONSIDER AND DELIBERATE ON POLICY AND LEGISLATION

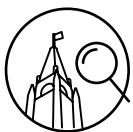


N=65

Source: Samara Centre 2019 MP Survey (MPs could select all that apply from a menu of options)

In summary

How did the 42nd Parliament measure up against the values of careful scrutiny, healthy partisanship, and good debate?



Careful scrutiny of Government:

More time was spent examining Government legislation in the 42nd Parliament, and Parliament amended more legislation. At the same time, the trend toward large, scrutiny-resistant bills continued. So did the trend of Government making frequent use of tools to shut down debate, such as time allocation. That option is no longer really available in the current minority Parliament, since the use of time allocation requires passing a vote in the House.

Yet a problem remains: How can Parliament keep up with the volume and complexity of Government legislation, particularly as a newly assertive Senate is likely to compound the time crunch? This Parliament needs to find its way back to cross-partisan cooperation on the use of time, in order to live up to its most essential responsibility: keeping tabs on Government and its legislation.



Healthy partisanship:

There are indications the last Parliament saw more cross-party collaboration than in other recent Parliaments. But MPs report that partisanship and polarization deepened as the Parliament wore on. A minority Parliament depends on cooperation between parties. And frankly, the stakes are higher than just this Parliament, as polarization strains democracies around the world. MPs should strive to hold onto the goodwill of a new Parliament,

and create space for collaboration within independent and empowered committees, all-party caucuses, and perhaps even the main Commons chamber itself.



Civility and meaningful debate:

The last Parliament was not uniquely civil or uncivil, though it deteriorated modestly over time. It's easy to dismiss civility as a secondary concern, but in an age of polarization, it matters. According to the Samara Centre's public opinion polling, nearly half of Canadians believe Canadian politics is becoming less civil (47%, compared to 32% who say it's basically the same, and 12% who say it's becoming more civil). Democracy demands ardent, sometimes angry, disagreement, but unconstrained incivility has a host of negative consequences, including reducing citizens' trust in politicians and institutions, causing political disengagement, and exacerbating polarization. It also can dissuade citizens from seeking public office, or prompt the early departure of those already elected. Leaders have the ability to uphold or overturn norms of appropriate political behaviour, which means MPs in this Parliament have a responsibility to showcase the kind of respectful, constructive, passionate debate which powers democracy.

But good debate needs more than civility. It needs real substance, and it needs to serve a purpose, and in recent years, according to MPs, it has not. The same old problems—canned speeches, non-questions followed by non-answers, deliberate off-topic digressions—persist. MPs in the 43rd Parliament should make better use of the time available to them, and re-establish Parliament at the centre of political conversations in Canada.

Recommendations for the 43rd Parliament

Last word goes to the Members

In the last Samara Centre MP Survey of the 42nd Parliament, MPs were asked to reflect on their work during the last four years. Many of their comments are direct recommendations to the next class of MPs.

To individual MPs

“Too much heckling, bullying, chaotic behaviour that is unprofessional and sets a terrible example to Canadians watching on TV.”

“Too few MPs read the departmental plans and too few understand the estimates. Fewer still read the orders in council for appointments or exercise their rights to call government official to account. Politicians come and go but the civil service remains and it must be held to account. There are too many committees exercising less and less of their powers. We don't need more talk shops, we need to force public servants to account for their actions and explain why certain decisions are made in certain ways.”

“Reading speeches should be prohibited. Only talking points, so that MPs know what they are speaking to.”

“We don't need 'talking points,' we need enough background and context to understand the essential elements of the policy or legislation.”

MPs' biggest regrets:

“Did not spend enough time getting to know my colleagues.”

“That I could not have been a better catalyst in bringing colleagues together from all parties to work more effectively together.”

“Not starting early and stronger in my work to fundamentally rehabilitate the institution.”

“Not voting more according to my conscience.”

The Samara Centre adds:

→ Good scrutiny is hard to do alone or with only your staff; use the resources available to you, including the Library of Parliament, House of Commons clerks, and Officers of Parliament.

→ Exercise independent thought and dissent from your party when there's a principled reason to do so; there's some evidence that voters reward that behaviour.

→ Think about the institutions of our democracy at the beginning of the Parliament when there is still time to improve them.

Recommendations for the 43rd Parliament

To House Leaders, whips, and party leaders

"We spend so much time fighting over procedure and delay tactics that we spend less time actually debating the bill."

"We are inefficient, we need to build for the future. We need to come to Ottawa and be inspired... 43 hours of voting doesn't help Canada get ahead."

"While I accept government agenda and whips' control is very important to bring a sense of order, Government agenda occupies most of the time of parliament. More time for private members bills and freedom to use SO31 (awarded by Speaker) will ensure MPs will be able to reflect their views and/or constituents."

"[I regret] the waste of time in the Chamber. Passing legislation could be done much more efficiently."

The Samara Centre adds:

- **Collaborate across party lines to more effectively use time.** For example, begin by identifying items with cross-party support and moving those items forward first to establish trust.
- **Make space for free votes** by better distinguishing between core government legislation and bills with more space for amendments.
- **Reconsider punishing MPs who dissent from time to time;** Canadians understand that tolerance of difference reflects strength, not weakness.

Recommendations for the 43rd Parliament

To the Speaker

“We could experiment with having Question Period questions submitted in advance to see if that led to more substantive answers.”

“Speaker should be more aggressive about taking Question Period questions away for aggressive heckling.”

“The Speaker must enforce the rules in the chamber more vigilantly—punishing hecklers and those who speak out of turn, shout, etc.”

“Give the Speaker power during Question Period to demand an answer from MPs when they do not provide one.”

The Samara Centre adds:

- Don't be afraid to flex your muscles; MPs on both sides of the aisle want an empowered Speaker who is willing to call out individual MPs to improve the overall health of debate.
- Discourage the use of written materials during debates.
- Remember that you are authorized by the House to decide who gets to speak. Encourage a more dynamic exchange between Members during debates by spontaneously recognizing backbench MPs.

What comes next?

This new minority Parliament could give rise to even worse polarization, even more suffocating party unity, and brinksmanship in the place of thoughtful scrutiny. Or MPs can re-discover the discipline that comes with having to cooperate, to more effectively hold the Government to account.

Methodology

This report employs a range of measures to explore the extent to which the 42nd Parliament conformed to Samara’s vision for political representatives who are independent, thoughtful, engaged and empowered. To put these aspirations in more concrete terms, we examine Parliament’s capacity to perform its core functions of scrutinizing the executive and reviewing legislation, and the extent to which the proceedings of the House were affected by partisan conflict and incivility. The quantitative data regarding the operation of the House of Commons (e.g. sitting days and use of time allocation) and the passage of bills (e.g. bill length, days of consideration, proportion of bills amended) from parliamentary sources, including the Legisinfo and Parlinfo websites, the House of Commons’ Status of House Business reports, and the Senate’s Progress of Legislation reports. Data on committee reports were similarly compiled from the House of Commons’ website, while the heckling frequency was obtained using Hansard. The Canadian dissent data

were graciously provided by Professor Jean-François Godbout, while the British data were sourced from the website publicwhip.org.uk.

The survey data came from original surveys of MPs conducted by the Samara Centre for Democracy in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Samara MP surveys are anonymous, available in both French and English, and can be filled out online or mailed in. Hard copies are mailed to the parliamentary offices of all sitting MPs and email copies are sent to their general accounts. MPs respond in both official languages. The response rate varies somewhat, between approximately 20-30% of MPs. The total number of MP respondents for each survey is as follows: 84 in 2017, 100 in 2018, and 67 in 2019 (though not every respondent completes each question). The sample size is noted where the data appears in the report. The sample from each survey is fairly representative of the partisan breakdown of the House of Commons.

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

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