

EMBARGOED until March 25, 2015

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Samara's first-ever report card on Canada's democracy awards a "C"

Causes include low participation and low trust

Toronto, March 25, 2015—The first-ever report card on Canadian democracy—Samara's Democracy 360—results in an overall grade of "C."

More disturbingly, the report card reveals there's more than low voter turnout to worry about this election year. Canadians are not participating in politics nearly as much as they could. Worse still, they don't believe politics affects them and they don't see their leaders as influential or effective.

"The political process now repels more citizens than it attracts—particularly young Canadians," said Samara Director Jane Hilderman. "While most evaluations of democracy focus on voter turnout, we need to better assess the relationship between citizens and political leaders beyond a trip to the ballot box every four years."

Samara's Democracy 360, a made-in-Canada report card on the state of Canada's democracy, takes a more comprehensive look at politics by using quantifiable indicators focused on three areas essential to a healthy democracy: communication, participation and political leadership. While not exhaustive, the Democracy 360 paints a fuller picture than ever before of the way that Canadians engage with—and think about—politics.

Link to the full report will be available here March 25th 2015:

<http://www.samaracanada.com/research/samara-democracy-360>

Some key findings:

- Canadians have low trust in Members of Parliament and parties and believe they largely fail to live up to their fundamental jobs. Only 40% of Canadians report that they trust MPs to do what is right.
- Only 31% of Canadians believe politics affects them every day. This underscores that few feel politics is relevant or important.
- Despite democracy's poor performance in Canadians' eyes, over half of us petition, donate to charity and volunteer. This reveals a strong desire to connect to causes rooted in and affected by politics.

"The grade of 'C' is not good enough in a country like Canada," added Alison Loat, Samara's co-founder and executive director. "A federal election presents a perfect opportunity for Canadians to turn this around. Let's get involved with campaigns, ask tough questions of candidates, and make a stronger democracy a theme in the upcoming federal election."

About Samara's Democracy 360

Samara's Democracy 360 is a made-in-Canada report card that grades key areas of Canada's democracy. It will help give citizens greater insight into the health of their democracy, encourage debate and provoke change where evidence suggests it's most needed.

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

- **Communication:** Do MPs and political parties reach out to Canadians? Are Canadians contacting their political leaders?
- **Participation:** How do Canadians participate beyond voting?
- **Leadership:** How do Canadians evaluate MPs and political parties on their core roles as leaders? How well do our leaders represent Canadians?

The Democracy 360 focuses primarily on federal politics, political parties and MPs, as well as citizens' engagement and perceptions of politics more generally. How citizens and leaders can improve the three areas of focus—that is, to *talk*, to *act* and to *lead* better—is also part of the report card.

Under the banner of #TalkActLead, Samara will be sourcing ideas and releasing resources as the federal election approaches to spur engagement.

In 2017, just in time for Canada's 150th birthday, Samara will revisit the baseline captured by the inaugural Democracy 360 so Canadians will see, in a quantifiable way, if democracy has improved or declined.

Read more at www.samaracanada.com

Samara's website also features analysis of the [Democracy 360 by province](#). Though Canadians experience most of their political life in the same way across the country, satisfaction with the work of MPs and political parties does vary. For example:

- Saskatchewan has the highest number of Canadians satisfied with democracy, while Ontarians are the most satisfied with the work of MPs.
- People in Quebec remain the most dissatisfied with the way democracy is working in Canada followed by Nova Scotians); Quebecers also are the most dissatisfied with how MPs and parties do their jobs.

About Samara

Samara Canada is dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics. Established as a charity in 2009, we have become Canada's most trusted, non-partisan champion of increased civic engagement and a more positive public life.

Samara Canada's research and educational programming shines new light on Canada's democratic system and encourages greater political participation across the country to build better politics, and a better Canada, for everyone.

A samara is the winged "helicopter" seed that falls from the maple tree. A symbol of Canada, it is also a reminder that from small seeds, big ideas can grow.