

CBC Asks: Is politics broken? Yes, says Alison Loat

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On March 25, **Samara Canada**, the charity I co-founded, will release Democracy 360, a benchmark report card on the state of Canada's democracy.

This report card looks beyond simple voter turnout as a way to measure the quality of democracy.

It explores the everyday relationship between citizens and politics, painting a richer picture of how Canadians engage with and think about politics. It also expands the focus on leadership beyond prime ministers and party leaders to include members of Parliament and political party organizations.

Without revealing too much, this report card shows that Canada's democracy isn't working nearly as well as it should. Canadians are not involved in politics as they could be, don't believe it affects them, and don't see their leaders as influential or efficacious.

Citizens are at democracy's heart, and enacting real change requires their participation. Unfortunately, the political process now repels more citizens than it attracts — particularly young Canadians.

Building a political process that is truly democratic requires a culture shift toward "everyday democracy," in which citizens believe politics is an effective route to make change, rather than something to be ignored or circumvented.

The coming federal election presents a critical opportunity to provoke all of us to help turn this situation around.