

## Parliamentary word count reveals who the Commons talkers and non-talkers are

A count of how many words each MP uttered in the Commons in 2012 reveals those closest to power talked the least

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OTTAWA—Words may have power, but power doesn't mean more words in Canada's House of Commons.

A [study to be released on Monday](#) has tallied the roughly eight million words spoken by federal MPs in the Commons during 2012 and has found that the politicians closest to power are not the people with the most to say.

In fact, the analysis by the Samara organization could be seen as vivid evidence that what happens inside the Commons has very little to do with the clout that MPs have outside the chamber.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, of all the party leaders, spoke least in the Commons last year: just 26,758 words in total. Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, the lone representative for her party, was one of the most garrulous MPs overall, speaking 174,783 words in 2012.

Here are 32 of May's thousands of words in the chamber: "We, as parliamentarians, must be the bulwark against abuse of power, even in a majority government. Our only shield is our traditions, the standing rules, precedent and our respect for the same."

Her word count was actually more than all the other leaders combined, proving too that MPs don't need the blessings of a big party to be heard in Parliament, despite recent claims by Conservative MPs about being muzzled by their party.

Tom Mulcair, who became NDP leader in March of 2012, spoke 44,498 words overall. Bob Rae, who was interim Liberal leader for that whole year, delivered 76,447.

The new Liberal leader, Justin Trudeau, kept his Commons contribution down to a sparse 5,408 words. However, he was campaigning across the country in the latter months of 2012, evidently exchanging more words with Canadians outside the capital than with his fellow MPs in Ottawa.

Conservatives overall were the least talkative. Though they occupy 53 per cent of the seats in the Commons, the Samara study found they uttered only 36 per cent of the millions of words flying

[http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/05/13/parliamentary\\_word\\_count\\_reveals\\_who\\_the\\_commons\\_talkers\\_and\\_nontalkers\\_are.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/05/13/parliamentary_word_count_reveals_who_the_commons_talkers_and_nontalkers_are.html)

around there in 2012. Many cabinet ministers, even prominent ones such as Heritage Minister James Moore and Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, spoke fewer than 30,000 words each.

New Democrats, on the other hand, took up more verbal space than their seats would indicate. They spoke 44 per cent of the words while occupying only 33 per cent of the seats.

An NDP MP, Peter Julian (Burnaby-New Westminster), took the top spot in 2012 with a word count of 226,027. He got to first place with his four-day response to the 2012 budget bill, orchestrated to deny the Liberals a chance to speak.

At one point in his talking marathon, Julian said: "I do not know how long my voice will hold out, but in my party our tradition has been to speak out until the job is done." That utterance alone contributed 27 words to his grand total for the year.

Kevin Lamoureux, the Liberals' sole Manitoba MP, wasn't far behind Julian with a word count of 222,451 for the year. In the Conservative corner, Kellie Leitch was the most talkative MP with 120,835 words. Many of her Tory colleagues spoke fewer than 3,000 words.

Former intergovernmental affairs minister Peter Penashue, forced to resign over an election expenses scandal and [fighting to reclaim his seat in a byelection Monday](#), was right down near the bottom of the rankings: only 977 words in total for the year

Only Tory colleague Rob Anders (Calgary West) spoke less than him. Anders was famously [caught sleeping](#) in the chamber in 2011.

More encouragingly, perhaps, under-represented groups poured out more than their proportional share. Women account for only 25 per cent of the seats in the chamber, but they spoke 31 per cent of the words. MPs under age 35 make up only 9 per cent of the Commons, but 11 per cent of the words came from them.

**Correction- May 13, 2013:** This article was edited from a previous version that mistakenly said Immigration minister Jason Kenney spoke fewer than 30,000 words. In fact, that was the word count for Heritage minister James Moore.

**Correction - May 16, 2013:** This article was edited from a previous version that incorrectly said MP Keith Asfield spoke less than 977 words in total.