

## Canadian political parties not doing their job: survey

Canadian political parties get an F in a new survey about how well they're carrying out their democratic tasks.

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OTTAWA—Canadians are giving political parties a failing grade in performing their basic democratic duties, a new survey finds.

“Reaching out to Canadians so their views can be represented” is identified as the most important job of political parties in the survey conducted by the Samara organization.

But when more than 1,800 survey respondents were asked how well Canada's political parties fulfilled that job, the score was just 43 per cent — a failing mark.

And more than two-thirds of people responding to the survey strongly agreed with this statement: “Candidates and political parties are interested only in people's votes, not their opinions.”

The survey is being released just as Parliament is dealing with the massive new [Fair Elections Act](#), containing hundreds of new provisions to govern political operations — but very few dealing with expanding voter turnout or engagement.

In its report on the survey, Samara says the results may show why Canadians have tuned out of politics — because the whole business increasingly looks like a closed society, talking only to itself.

“Canadians instinctively know there's a party going on and they're not invited, leading them to logically conclude that if parties are not interested in them, then these organizations and the people within them must be interested only in themselves,” states the report, titled *By Invitation Only*.

Failing grades were also given to political parties on the ideas front — either in coming up with new ideas or hearing ideas from party members.

Only 4 per cent of respondents thought that the most important job of parties should be competing in elections and recruiting candidates, yet Samara observed that this is the kind of activity that often gets the most attention in the media.

And only 13 per cent said political parties should be primarily concerned with getting people out to vote — a finding that runs counter to assertions recently made by [Pierre Poilievre](#), Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

In explaining why the Fair Elections Act sets limits on the ability of the Chief Electoral Officer to communicate with voters, Poilievre said that this was the duty of Canadian political parties.

[http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/02/18/canadian\\_political\\_parties\\_not\\_doing\\_their\\_job\\_survey.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/02/18/canadian_political_parties_not_doing_their_job_survey.html)

“Political candidates who are aspiring for office are far better at inspiring voters to get out and cast their ballot than our government bureaucracies,” Poilievre told the Commons after the Fair Elections Act was introduced earlier this month.

Samara’s survey respondents appear to disagree and they gave the political parties a grade of just 54 per cent — a D in the classroom — for their voter-motivation efforts.

The survey was conducted by Samara last summer among 1,807 respondents 18 years of age or older who answered questions online. Young Canadians, aged 18 to 30, were included in the survey in greater proportions than they are in the general population. Responses were weighted as well to account for regional, gender and language considerations.