

Political word count: MPs range from windy to nearly mute

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New Democrat MPs won't shut up. Many Tories hardly talk at all. And the Green Party's Elizabeth May talks more than the three other party leaders combined.

Those are some of the findings of a unique analysis that sliced and diced nearly eight million words spoken last year in the House of Commons by members of Parliament.

The analysis by Samara, a charitable think-tank that works to improve political participation in Canada, uncovered an astonishing variation in MPs' loquaciousness in the House.

New Democrat Peter Julian was an unstoppable verbal force, emitting 226,027 words in 2012 to narrowly edge Liberal Kevin Lamoureux for the title of most talkative MP.

But Conservatives Keith Ashfield, Rob Anders and Peter Penashue barely cleared their throats, each managing fewer than 1,000 words in the House of Commons during all of 2012.

Samara gathered the data while researching the alignment between what MPs talk about in the House and the declared interests of Canadians. Alison Loat, Samara's co-founder and executive director, said she hoped the analysis would "shine a light" on how MPs use their powerful public platform in the House of Commons.

To help voters better grasp the relative volume of MPs' verbal contributions, Samara paired the number of words spoken by a sampling of 18 MPs with notable Canadian books of similar length. Julian's output, for example, was equivalent to Rohinton Mistry's epic novel, *A Fine Balance*. Lamoureux matched Conrad Black's verbosity in *A Matter of Principle*. By contrast, Ashfield's comparator was Robert Service's poem, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*.

Anders spoke about as many words as appear in the slender children's alphabet book, *M is for Maple*.

Sometimes, the book chosen to represent an MP's verbal volume was uncannily apt: Naomi Klein's *No Logo* for Elizabeth May, for example, or Ezra Levant's *Shakedown* for Pierre Poilievre.

Here's a closer look:

- Motormouths

<http://www2.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=330395f6-f422-4d98-bdd7-d2a6e75a2f28>



When it comes to verbosity, Julian and Lamoureux were in a league of their own, both about 50,000 words clear of their nearest House of Commons competitor. That would be May, whose 174,783 words practically qualified her as a one-woman party - which, come to think of it, she is.

The top Tory was Kellie Leitch, a rookie MP who delivered 120,835 words despite being a mere parliamentary secretary. That's 33,000 more words than Labour Minister Lisa Raitt, the most talkative of Stephen Harper's ministers, managed last year.

- Strong and silent

A baker's dozen MPs generated fewer than 2,000 House of Commons words last year, all of them Tories. Four - Penashue, Alice Wong, Diane Ablonczy and Keith Ashfield - were in cabinet, which makes their silence all the more remarkable.