

They know what they don't like

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Published on: December 08, 2011

For its latest [report](#) on the state of our democracy, Samara consulted the public.

Overall, our research shows that declining political engagement is, at least in part, due to concrete experiences with politics. Indeed, participants' answers belie the notion that the Canadian public is not knowledgeable or sophisticated enough to understand how their political system works. Rather, the people we spoke to are keenly aware of the forces that affect politics.

Greg Fingas [looks](#) on the bright side.

Of course, there figures to be far more work done in convincing voters who have decided the political process is futile. But Samara's conversations suggest that there's a massive potential constituency for anybody who can successfully convince doubtful voters that it's possible for politics to result in real positive results for ordinary people (as a matter of substance rather than sloganeering). And that in turn should offer hope for the engaged group that its work can lead to significant results if it helps to make that case.

Craig McInnes [wonders](#) what a better system would look like.

One way to look at these findings is to say that all parts of the system, from political parties to politicians to governments, need to become more service-oriented. No doubt that would help. We need to feel as if the public service works for us, that our MPs and MLAs are representing our views, not just answering to their party leaders.

But I wonder whether this isn't also a question of unreasonable expectations. Successful democracy can't be defined as a system that allows everyone to achieve exactly what they want. That is too high a bar. What we can strive for is a system that gives anyone who wants to participate a chance to feel as if their voices matter even if their views don't prevail.