



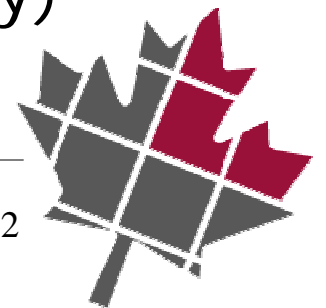
Engaging Canadians: Briefing for New MPs

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Public Involvement

- Communication: sending out info (passive)
- Exchange ideas: Q & A (reactive)
- Consultations: Send plan for input
(participation)
- Engagement: Problem-solving, learning
(reciprocity)



À quoi les Canadiens aspirent-ils?

1. Transparence : Où va l'argent ? Quelle différence cela fait-il ?
2. Surveillance par une tierce partie : renseignements dignes de foi, mais a pour effet d'affaiblir le lien entre l'État et les citoyens
3. Participation plus poussée au discours public, mais pas de démocratie participative : possibilités régulières d'influencer la prise de décisions (c'est-à-dire, un milieu propice à l'interaction entre les élections)

(Abelson, en préparation, RCRPP, 2004)



What do Most MPs Want

1. A “resource centre” to support connections to citizens
 - Training for staff
 - Tool-kits for engagement techniques
 - Information technology support
2. More involvement in government consultations with citizens (Forum on Parliamentary Reform: Summary Report)
3. More resources for MPs and Standing Committees to support engagement



What Others are Doing

- Engagement is now a tool for governing in a number of countries, including
 - Denmark, UK, Brazil
- Two provinces have adopted deliberative techniques
 - Citizen Assembly in BC; citizen assembly and juries in Ontario
- Parliament has not adopted deliberation yet, though individual MPs (and others) have



What Parliament Can Do

- Make citizens a part of the committee process as a complement to stakeholders
 - Invite a representative group to deliberate
 - Then meet with the Committee
- Make engagement part of the constituency strategy
 - Learning sessions
 - Deliberation on core issues, e.g. accountability, budget priorities, ethical choices, etc



Requirements for Engagement

- Governments commit to:
 - Relationship building (citizens with citizens; citizens with government)
 - Sharing power and agenda setting
 - Opportunities for learning and collaboration
 - Info to fill gaps in public understanding
 - Resources and realistic timeframes
 - Funds / support for civic activities to enable participation
 - Communicating impact on decision-making



Can e-Dialogue Help?

- Advantages
 - Reduces cost and time requirement
 - Enables more people to participate (esp. youth)
 - Supplements a smaller person-to-person experience
- Disadvantages
 - Lacks trust of in-person dialogue
 - Tendency to pursue individual interest, rather than build on others' views
 - Little scope to “walk in the other person’s shoes”



When to Engage Citizens

- Need for new directions, to find out where people agree, to choose the better trade-off
 - Experts and stakeholders will provide the technical and practical advice to complement citizens' input
- Through the policy cycle
 - Issue identification
 - Values framework
 - Priority setting
 - Evaluation of outcomes



Outcomes

- Framework of values and principles to guide decisions and communications
- Understanding of why citizens think what they do, and what sticking points prevent progress
- A more informed public, as the groundwork for consensus building
 - They will understand the final decision, even if it is not their preference
- All are essential to good policy making in a country with so many divides, and such complex challenges as Canada





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