



Canadian Study
of Parliament Group

Groupe canadien
d'étude des parlements

CONFERENCE

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

Friday, May 22, 2015
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Library and Archives Canada
395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Room B

AGENDA

Reform of parliamentary procedure and practice enables an ancient institution to adapt to a changing environment, including relatively new democratic values and expectations. This conference is structured around four discussion panels that bring together parliamentary scholars, officials, and observers to assess the parliamentary reform 'state of play' in 2015: where Canada's Parliament has come from and where it needs to go in order to maximize its contribution to Canadian political life.

8:30 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Opening Remarks

9:05 a.m. **House Reforms of the Past:
Actions, Outcomes, Lessons Learned**

This panel assesses what House of Commons reform has achieved thus far and how future reform initiatives can benefit from lessons of the past. Which reforms have worked, and what explains their success? Which have failed, and why? Which have proven to be the most important? Particular focus will be placed on the experience of past 30 years. Among the developments to be discussed are: electing the Speaker, committee reforms, financial reporting, Committee support, and private members' business.

Kelly Blidook, Professor
Department of Political Science
Memorial University



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Gary Levy, Fellow
Bell Chair in Canadian Parliamentary Democracy
Carleton University

Jonathan Malloy, Professor
Department of Political Science
Carleton University

10:20 a.m. Break

10:35 a.m. **Benefiting From Experience in the Provinces and Elsewhere**

Parliamentary reform frequently combines innovation and imitation. This panel will examine current practices and recent reforms in the provincial legislative assemblies and Westminster-model systems outside Canada. What are the key procedural innovations of recent years? Do they respond to problems shared with Canada's Senate or House of Commons? How well do approaches taken in other jurisdictions work, and do they provide best practices that could be adopted in Ottawa? How can the effectiveness of legislatures be determined, and are some Westminster-model legislatures more successful than others? How well do Canada's Senate and House of Commons measure up?

Michel Bonsaint, Secretary General
Quebec National Assembly

Paul Thomas, Doctoral Student
University of Toronto

Graham White, Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Toronto

11:50 p.m. Buffet Lunch



12:30 p.m. **Lunchtime Guest Speaker**

Meg Russell, Professor of British and Comparative Politics
and Deputy Director of the Constitution Unit
University College London

1:00 p.m. Break

1:15 p.m. **Senate Reform: Inevitable or Impossible?**

Reform of Canada's Upper Chamber has been the subject of much debate since the beginning of Confederation, and yet its role and structure remain essentially as they were in 1867. This panel will consider Senate reform options in the wake of the 2014 Supreme Court of Canada decision concerning constitutional amendments. Is Senate reform still needed and, if so, what are the priorities today? Is significant Senate reform still possible? What are the major barriers, both political and constitutional, and how can they be overcome? Can meaningful reform be achieved without modifying the Constitution and, if so, how?

Blair Armitage, Principal Clerk
Committees Directorate
Senate of Canada

Louis Massicotte, Professor
Department of Political Science,
Laval University

Benoît Pelletier, Professor
Faculty of Law (Civil Law Section)
University of Ottawa

2:30 p.m. Break



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2:45 p.m. **House of Commons Reform: Where Next?**

This panel focuses on questions relating to House of Commons reform in the future. Does the House need to be reformed and, if so, why and how? What are the procedural reform priorities? Is the House the problem, or should priority attention be given to other areas such as electoral reform, culture change or broader reforms? Are administrative changes needed, such as changes to committee support or other non-procedural changes? What are the barriers to change and how can they be overcome?

Jane Hilderman, Director of Research and
Acting co-director
Samara Canada

Jack Stilborn, Retired
Library of Parliament

Lori Turnbull, Professor
Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University

4:00 p.m. Concluding Remarks