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# Parliamentary Centre



**Strategic Plan  
2024-2028**

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# Executive Summary

Democracy is in trouble. Around the world, too many existing democracies are weakening ... or disappearing. In response, the Parliamentary Centre is committed to bring the best of Canada to the world – to help strengthen democracies. That is our vision. This strategic business plan is about how we intend to do that. Our plan is not about altering course. It is about supplementing our agenda so we are in a stronger position to support democracies. The road to our future has five core elements:

- 1. A Sharp Focus on Our Core Business.** As we have done for more than 55 years, we will continue to bring the best of Canada to the world to:
  - Strengthen Democratic Institutions and Processes
  - Support Legislators and Public Servants
  - Support Citizens – Civil Society Organizations and Marginalized Groups
- 2. Canadian Summit for Democracy.** We will invite Canadian thought leaders on democracy to join us in an inaugural and annual Canadian Summit for Democracy. The intent is to convene and amplify Canadian expertise – a direct response to the Government of Canada’s commitment to provide faster and more flexible Canadian support for fragile democracies. At the end of the summit, we will table our best ideas and advice on how and where to strengthen and defend democracy.
- 3. Democracy Research.** There is no substitute for knowing. In this vein, we intend to create – and share – a Democracy Research Library. We will communicate the latest additions to our library – the latest democracy data, interviews, research, best practises and the best ideas.
- 4. Adapting our Business Model.** Since 2014 the Centre has made a concerted effort to diversify funding sources. The result of our efforts is that funding from non-Canadian sources increased several-fold. Our efforts to diversify our funding sources will continue. We will also drive to more effective and sustainable programming. In part, this means exploring opportunities to sustain and expand upon what was built – turning program results into reusable, expandable and sustainable products. Adapting our business model also includes strengthening management accountability. World-class programs and services require world-class administration. Our immediate management priorities are strengthening financial and human resource management as well as communications.
- 5. And One More Thing.** Democracy research increasingly distinguishes strong democratic institutions from citizens’ confidence in democracy. One does not guarantee the other. The Parliamentary Centre believes that in addition to strengthening democratic institutions, we need to listen to what citizens are saying – a citizen-centred approach to democracy. Accordingly, the Parliamentary Centre will work with partners to explore this idea – we will see where the trail leads.

With our strategic direction set, more detailed planning is underway – planning to turn the five core elements of our strategic plan into reality.

## Why?

*“Evidence shows that democracy brings economic growth, increased access to safe water and electricity, and decreased levels of infant mortality. What is more, democracy increases levels of education, improves gender equality, and reduces conflict. And, democracies commit to and deliver more policies to respond to climate change. These tangible benefits are reason alone to strengthen democracy worldwide.”*

*Anthony Smith, 2023*

## Introduction

In March, 2023, world leaders from 74 countries came together at the second [Summit for Democracy](#), hosted by the United States. The leaders each tabled their individual commitments to strengthen democracy at home. They also signed a declaration that expressed their commitment to support each other in bolstering democracy and combatting authoritarian trends.<sup>1</sup>

The backdrop for the summit was encapsulated in a 2023 Global State of Democracy Report published by [International IDEA](#). The report ranked 173 countries in four wide-ranging categories of democratic performance: Representation; Rights; Rule of Law; and Participation (see Figure 1).

According to the report, democracy is contracting in every region of the world. In half of the 173 countries assessed, International IDEA saw declines in at least one of their four categories of democratic performance. In fact, the year 2022 marked the sixth consecutive year in which “more countries experienced net declines in democratic processes than net improvements” – the longest period of decline since their measurements began back in 1975. Democracy, in other words, is in trouble.

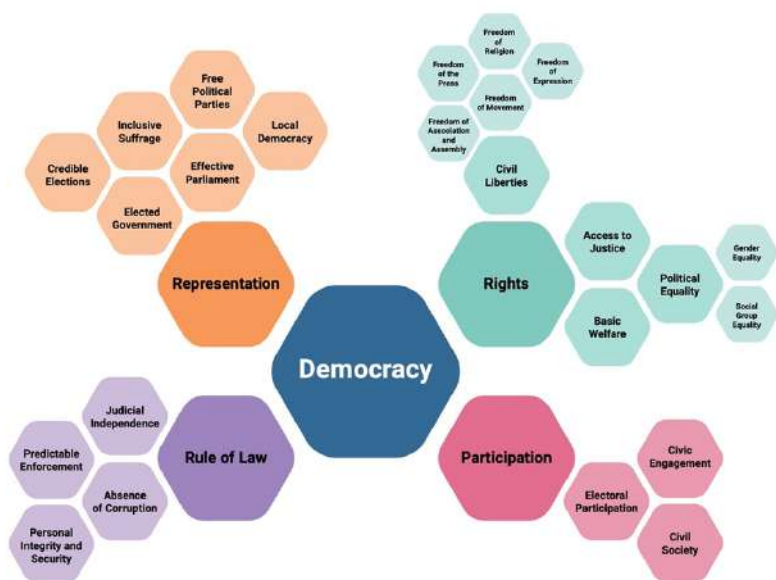


Figure 1: International IDEA, 2023

<sup>1</sup> The declaration also set a definition for democracy, adopted by the Parliamentary Centre – democracy is governance that reflects “the effective participation and will of the people” ([Declaration of the Summit for Democracy](#), 2023).

The term “democratic decline” refers to a shift away from democratic rule and towards autocracy (e.g., Mietzner & Marcus, 2021). Consistent with the 2023 report by International IDEA, studies by the [V-Dem Institute](#) (2016, 2019) at the University of Gothenburg suggest that the number of democracies in the world is indeed declining, with 24 countries in 2019 affected by the “[third wave of autocratization](#).” Included in the list of 24 countries is our neighbour – the United States.

From the start, the Parliamentary Centre has existed for one reason – to bring the best of Canada to help strengthen democracies around the world. Our commitment is to make a difference. This business plan is about how we intend to continue doing that.



To be clear, this plan is not about altering course or changing our current mandate. It is not about shifting our focus. This plan is about supplementing our existing work. We are doing that to two ends. First, we need to continue to diversify our funding sources. Second, recognizing that around the world, democracy is threatened as never before, we believe that we must move the Parliamentary Centre into a stronger position to make a difference – to better support the Government of Canada’s priorities on democracy and to play a stronger role in bringing Canadian expertise and assistance to democracies around the world.

## About Us

Since its founding in 1968, the Parliamentary Centre has been at the forefront of Canada’s democratic assistance efforts internationally. Originally established to provide orientation and research support to the Parliament of Canada, the Centre’s programming has gradually acquired a global focus, in alignment with Canadian foreign policy priorities. We have supported thousands of democratic actors in more than 70 countries ... and counting. Incorporated under the Canadian Business Corporations Act as a charitable organization, the Centre is non-governmental and non-partisan.



Through uniquely tailored programs – more than 300 to date – that we develop with our local partners, we advance democratic practices necessary for peaceful, secure and prosperous societies. As Canada’s most experienced, non-partisan organization dedicated to strengthening democracies, the Parliamentary Centre is proud of its history as a leader in inclusive democratic governance.

## Our Vision

To bring the best of Canada to help strengthen democracies around the world.

## Our Mission

We bring together Canadian and international expertise and experience to:

- Develop tailored strategies and projects to:
  - Strengthen democratic institutions and processes; and
  - Support elected representatives, officials, civil societies and marginalized groups.
- Provide thought leadership to global democracy challenges and parliamentary solutions.
- Share knowledge and build capacity.

## Our Values:

- **Beneficiary-focused.** We deliver programs and products that meet the specific needs of our clients. We recognize that building strong democratic institutions and processes requires investing in people.
- **Collaborative.** We seek collaborations with the best organizations and individual experts to provide the best solutions.
- **Inclusive.** Our greatest asset is our staff and we seek employee engagement<sup>2</sup> in all we do.
- **Evidence-based.** We believe that there is no substitute for knowing. We deliver our programs and products in a professional manner with clear and concise outcomes.
- **Responsive.** We aim for timely solutions adapted to the evolving needs of our beneficiaries.
- **Ethical.** We conduct our work with honesty, integrity, fairness and respect. We are reliable and accountable. Our reputation precedes us so we never compromise on our ethics.

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<sup>2</sup> Among other things, strong employee engagement means high job satisfaction, high levels of motivation, continuous learning and pride in the organization.

# Our Value Proposition

For the Parliamentary Centre, our value proposition begins with thought leadership – developing and disseminating innovative ideas and insights to address democracy challenges. This includes research, policy analysis, needs assessments and identifying good practices around the world. By contributing to the intellectual discourse on democracy, the Parliamentary Centre adds value to Canadian policy-makers and national and international partners, shaping how concepts of democracy are understood and implemented.

Following thought leadership is the design and implementation of impactful programming – training and capacity-building programs, interventions to enhance the effectiveness of democratic institutions, creating and managing peer support and knowledge networks, policy development, and many others. We address specific challenges and needs with tailored programs designed to strengthen democratic institutions, processes and civil society. We maintain a sharp focus on tangible results.

Thought leadership and successful programming requires strategic partnerships with key stakeholders. Collaborating with the Parliament of Canada, provincial and territorial assemblies, the Government of Canada, non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and many other actors allows the Parliamentary Centre to lever expertise and resources. Our partnerships enhance the reach and impact of programs and foster a collaborative approach to strengthening democracy.



Within this strategic framework, our core programs and products are:

**Strengthening Institutions and Supporting Officials & Citizens:** The Parliamentary Centre assists legislatures and other government institutions around the world strengthen their democracies by bolstering: specific government programs; policies; processes; working culture and practises; and citizens - civil society organizations and marginalized groups. The Parliamentary Centre also supports legislatures in addressing the erosion of public trust by enhancing citizen participation and engagement through open parliamentary processes and innovative tools.

**Training and Capacity Building:** The Parliamentary Centre designs and delivers educational programs, training and hands-on support in collaboration with partners on a wide range of subjects – all to assist democratic institutions to fulfil their oversight, legislative, representative and policy functions.

**Knowledge Sharing and Peer Support:** Facilitated by the Parliamentary Centre, legislators worldwide support and learn from each other. Backed by our in-house experts and associates (current and former parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and public servants), our knowledge exchanges are tailored to the specific needs of our beneficiaries. The Parliamentary Centre also mobilizes Canadian and international parliamentarians and staff – active and former – in international peer-to-peer engagements designed to respond to their specific needs.

**Research:** As challenges related to democratic development and resilience evolve, we undertake research through internships and research partnerships with universities to strengthen our programming.

# Current Programs

## International Programs

For many years now, the core business of the Parliamentary Centre has been the design, implementation and management of innovative, uniquely tailored international programs. With Global Affairs Canada and its predecessors as among the key funders, we have levered our extensive contacts and networking skills to bring together innumerable experts and practitioners. From legal experts in Africa to experts on keeping legislatures functioning under emergency situations in the Ukraine, we build synergistic teams focused on strengthening legislatures and other democratic institutions, processes and people. In alignment with the priorities of the Government of Canada, we have a long history of designing and delivering major programs to strengthen such areas as financial accountability, anti-corruption, poverty reduction, gender equality and inclusivity, legislative process, parliament/CSO collaboration, executive-legislative relations, strategic and operational planning for democratic institutions, legislative research, and others.

**Our International Program Funders**

**Canadian / Canadian-based Funders**

- Global Affairs Canada
- International Development Research Centre
- Parliament of Canada
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- DeFehr Foundation

**International Funders**

- European Union
- USAID
- US State Department
- Swiss Development Cooperation
- Swedish International Development Agency
- Department for International Development Cooperation, UK
- GIZ, Germany
- United Nations Development Program
- United Nations Development Fund (UNDEF)
- The World Bank
- Denmark's development cooperation (DANIDA)
- Individual parliaments

A description of our international programs can be found on our website: <https://parlcent.org>.  
Examples of our current international programs include:

### **Ukraine**

Our work in the Ukraine is about supporting and building the capacity of the Verkhovna Rada – Ukraine’s Parliament - to provide democratic oversight of the war effort – strengthening Ukrainian resilience and non-military resistance in response to Russian aggression. Our work has three components. The first is providing support to committees and legislators most directly engaged in law-making that responds to the ongoing aggression. These include the National Security, Defence and Intelligence Committee, the Committee on Law Enforcement and the Committee on European Integration.

The second component is about strengthening Parliament itself so it can endure under the conditions of war and be prepared for its critical roles in reconstruction. The third component helps relevant Rada committees engage in new areas of legislative responsibility that focus on the rebuilding of liberated regions, regions along the front lines and other territories affected by the war. The initiative is made possible with financial support of the PSOPs fund of Global Affairs Canada.

### **Ghana, Togo, Kenya**

Africa programs have been the Parliamentary Centre’s largest international focus. Since 1999, the Parliamentary Centre has worked with more than 30 African Parliaments at both the national and regional (multi-county) levels.

The Inclusive Legislatures for Gender-Responsive Policies Project is a four-year initiative (2022-2026) implemented in partnership with the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs. In Ghana, Kenya and Togo, this project supports legislatures to assess gaps and strengthen their capacities to incorporate gender aspects into their legislative and oversight roles. It addresses barriers to women’s participation in democratic processes and amplifies women’s voices, including COVID-19 responses and recovery efforts.

The project also improves legislative engagement with civil society, particularly women’s rights organizations. More specifically, the project will (1) enhance the capacity of legislatures to formulate and operationalize gender-responsive strategies and plans; (2) enhance the capacity of legislatures to implement administrative reforms to enable gender-sensitive resource use and service delivery; (3) support legislatures to amend and pass inclusive gender laws, including gender-sensitive budgets; (4) support legislatures to set up systems to oversee the achievement of gender equality commitments by executive branches; and (5) enable legislatures to connect with citizens, in particular women and girls.



## Armenia

Support to the Parliament of Armenia was launched in 2019. The program provides strategic support to the National Assembly of Armenia to enhance its internal governance and support services to parliamentarians. It also works with the Office of the Human Rights Defender to strengthen legislation and regulatory acts related to the rights of persons with disabilities. Global Affairs Canada has endorsed the concept of a new and larger, three-year phase to the project, reflecting recommendations made by Stephane Dion, Canada's Special Envoy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new phase will include a focus on the establishment of Canada-Armenia Parliamentary Forum that will allow Canadian and Armenian legislators to exchange experiences with the goal of advancing democratic reforms, inclusivity and gender equality. This work is made possible with the support of the Pro-Dem fund of Global Affairs Canada.

## Myanmar

To encourage and enable the participation of Rohingya (Muslim people inhabiting western Burma or Myanmar) in advancing reconciliation efforts and building Myanmar's inclusive democratic future, the Parliamentary Centre offers capacity-building fellowships for young Rohingya leaders. The initiative is made possible with the support of the International Development Research Centre.

## **Domestic Programs**

Our work to strengthen democracy began more than five decades ago within Canada. Our work in Canada continues today – the Parliamentary Centre's primary Canadian program is called EngageParlDiplo.

### EngageParlDiplo

[EngageParlDiplo](#) was established in 2011 to provide orientation and policy panels to newly elected Members of Parliament and newly arrived foreign diplomats to Canada. Formerly the Carleton Initiative for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Engagement, this initiative is now led by the Parliamentary Centre in partnership with Carleton University.

Today, EngageParlDiplo is a unique program that brings together decision-makers and diplomats in a dialogue about crucial issues affecting Canada's governance and global influence. The Centre has succeeded in securing private sources of Canadian funds to support our work, providing opportunities for thought leadership and project development.

Orientation sessions for new Members of Parliament and for diplomats continues. Exciting new initiatives under the EngageParlDiplo banner include support for women's political voices in Africa – a forum that brings together the Canada Africa Parliamentary Association, senior officials from Global Affairs Canada and other thought leaders.

**Other Domestic Programs**

The House of Commons is a crucial contributor to the Centre’s work, primarily as our host within the parliamentary precinct in Ottawa. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff participate in the Parliamentary Centre’s programming. Beneficiaries of Parliamentary Centre programs participate in the annual Parliamentary Officers Study Program organized and partly funded by Parliament.

Provincial assemblies also participate in the Centre’s programming, particularly Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia. Provincial participation is an important asset to the Centre. The size and resources of some Canadian provincial assemblies are more aligned with some of the national legislatures of countries where the Centre works, often providing relevant and valuable experience. Accordingly, the Centre is seeking to expand provincial-level partnerships.

A new domestic engagement for the Centre – in June 2023, the House of Commons approached the Parliamentary Centre to assess our interest in assuming the stewardship of the longstanding Parliamentary Internship Program. Every year since 1970, the Parliamentary Internship Programme has recruited 10 young professionals – non-partisan interns selected through a national competition. Each intern completes placements with two Members of Parliament and meet with senior policymakers, diplomats, journalists, scholars, politicians, and leaders in civil society. The interns take part in academic seminars, write an innovative academic research paper, share their knowledge of Parliament with young Canadians, and take part in legislative study tours to Québec, Brussels, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Nunavut.

Another noteworthy domestic events:

- The Parliamentary Centre hosts the Global Democracy Dialogues, a series of discussions between Canada and the U.S. in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa. The dialogues take a deep look at worldwide challenges to democracy and how the U.S., Canada and others can respond. Topics range from protecting human rights and political and civil liberties against new threats to confronting hostile actors and authoritarian backsliding to considering how feminist approaches to democracy can build a safer and more inclusive world.
- In 2022, the Parliamentary Centre hosted its inaugural awards event – **Do It for Democracy**. More than 150 guests were welcomed by British High Commissioner H.E. Susannah Goshko,

**Our Domestic Program Funders**

**Canadian / Canadian-based Sponsors**

- Canadian donors for Engage Parl Diplo
  - Air Canada
  - CN
  - Manulife
  - IBC / BAC
  - Suncor
  - Nutrien
  - Telus
  - TD Bank
  - Toyota
  - Canadian Telecommunications Association
- DeFehr Foundation

**International Funders**

- US Embassy to Canada
- UK High Commission to Canada

including Members of Parliament, senators, journalists, members of the judiciary and foreign diplomacy and business sponsors. The first **Because Democracy Matters** award was presented to Bob Rae, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations. The 2023 event was equally successful with the **Because Democracy Matters** award presented to former Prime Minister Joe Clark.

## To the Future

The Government of Canada's foreign policy and international assistance efforts give priority to democracy and its underlying principles of inclusion, equality, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Canada works to advance democracy that is inclusive – meaning that citizens engage in decisions that impact their lives. The Government of Canada places particular emphasis on the inclusion of women, young people, vulnerable and marginalized groups in all their diversity – consistent with the Feminist International Assistance Policy, Canada's Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Internationally, Canada also puts an emphasis on strengthening the core elements of democracy (Government of Canada, 2023), including:

- Resilient and active civil societies
- Independent media and Internet freedom
- Political participation and inclusion of women in decision-making
- Free, fair, and inclusive electoral processes
- Diverse, inclusive, and pluralistic legislatures and other representative bodies
- Rule of law & promotion and protection of human rights
- Digital inclusion
- Youth civic engagement

Government of Canada priorities reflect a recognition that more than advancing democracy, in the current climate, Canada must play a role in defending democracy. To this end, the Global Affairs agenda is evolving – the department is exploring ways to strengthen Canada's engagement on democracy given the "pressures on democratic principles in a contested geopolitical world" (Global Affairs Departmental Plan, 2023-2024). The department aims to modernize its policy tools to meet the rapidly evolving challenges and is prepared to "actively contribute recognized Canadian expertise on democracy ..." The department is also mandated to establish a new, independent centre to expand the availability of Canadian expertise and assistance.

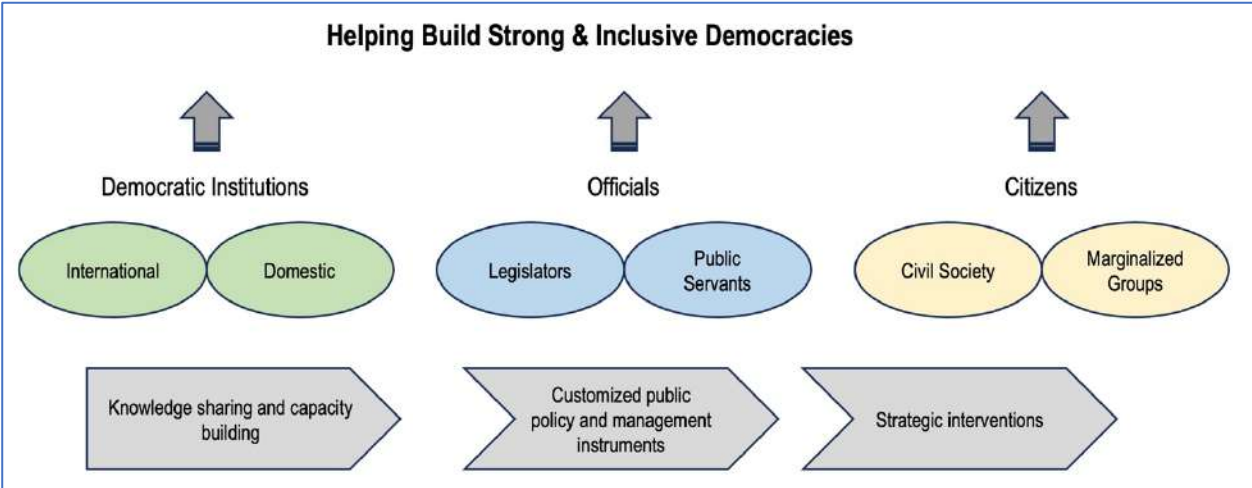
"Today, we joined our international partners in reaffirming our commitment to strengthening democracy. The democracies we are a part of didn't happen by accident, and they won't endure without effort."

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister,  
Second Global Summit for Democracies,  
March 29, 2023

The Parliamentary Centre also recognizes that around the world, democracy is threatened and we must move ourselves into a stronger position to support the Government of Canada’s priorities on democracy. In particular, we must help harness Canadian expertise and assistance to better enable Canada to provide fast and flexible support for fragile and emerging democracies. We need to bring the best of Canada to democracies around the world. That is what we intend to do. Here is how.

### 1. A Sharp Focus on Our Core Business

As noted above, the core business of the Parliamentary Centre is the design, execution and management of uniquely tailored international programs – bringing the best of Canada to help strengthen democracies around the world – grounded on Canadian Government priorities. The Parliamentary Centre is proud to play a role in advancing Canada’s priorities. We are proud to support Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in Ghana, Togo, Kenya by working to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in their legislative, oversight, and representation roles. We are proud to help advance Canada’s commitment to support Ukraine’s defence, resilience and rebuilding, democratic reforms in Armenia and the peaceful restoration of democracy in Myanmar. We are also proud to support the Women, Peace and Security Agenda as the secretariat for the global network of Women Legislators in Defence, Security and Peace (WLID) – an initiative that enables women who are active in policy debates to connect to each other and to knowledge and other resources necessary to advance institutional change.



We will sharpen our focus on our core business – and our core strengths – in full alignment with Government of Canada priorities. To this end, our three primary goals are:

1. **Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Processes:** As we have done for more than 55 years, we will continue to bring the best of Canada to the world – our unique experiences of a bilingual, multicultural federation with diverse legal and governance systems.

2. **Supporting Officials - Legislators and Public Servants:** As we have done for more than two decades, we will continue to provide Legislators and Public Servants with networks, relationships, peer support, strategies, tools and knowledge to resolve operational issues while advancing inclusive practices that empower women and marginalized groups.
3. **Supporting Citizens – Civil Society Organizations and Marginalized Groups:** We will continue to advance Canadian Government priorities by increasing active participation of marginalized groups, Civil Society Organizations, women, and youth in the government processes that impact their lives.

To achieve these goals, among the skills and experience we bring to the table are:

#### **Knowledge Sharing & Capacity Building**

- 55 years of accumulated knowledge acquired through: needs assessments; designing and implementing cutting-edge programming; research and analysis of governance systems, democratic reforms and inclusivity; and working with leading-edge practitioners
- E-Learning platforms to showcase work, networks and communities of practices
- Capacity building programs targeted at tangible results in inclusive policy-making, legislative process, and effective oversight of the use of public funds
- Facilitating exchanges with Indigenous communities in Canada to increase knowledge and advance Truth and Reconciliation.
- Facilitating multi-party exchanges between legislators on key issues in support of inclusive democracy and the functioning of democratic institutions

#### **Customized Public Policy & Management Instruments**

- Practical training, direct support and effective tools for improved review, amending and passing of gender-responsive budgets and legislation and the oversight of their implementation
- Developing new legislation and economic action plans to reduce poverty and create employment

#### **Strategic Interventions**

- Using technology to enable Civil Society Organizations and marginalized groups to participate in the formulation of policy, budgets and legislation
- Supporting Parliament–Civil Society Organization exchanges in creating a more accessible and inclusive environment for Indigenous communities, women and girls, youth, LGBTQIA+, and other groups.
- Designing & implementing civic education programs on democracy & inclusion.
- Facilitating youth Parliaments

## 2. Canadian Summit for Democracy

Leaders attending the 2023 International Summit for Democracy recognized that democracy can take many forms. Perhaps what makes Canada unique in advancing democracy is that our focus has always been about helping other countries strengthen and grow their own democracies — to develop their own systems of governance. Canada is known for sharing expertise so that others can pick and choose what might work for them. But that expertise must be assembled and focused.



One of our strongest skills at the Centre is assembling vibrant and productive knowledge networks. Levering that skill, we will reach out to Indigenous leaders, Public Servants, Parliamentarians, our Canadian partners and thought leaders in the not-for-profit and private sectors. We will invite them to join us in an inaugural Canadian Summit for Democracy.

Our focus at the summit will be on bringing together Canadian expertise and assistance – building an ongoing relationship and network of experts and practitioners. Among the value propositions is strengthening our core business. Much more than that, the intent is to convene and amplify Canadian expertise – **a direct response to the Government of Canada’s commitment to faster and more flexible support for fragile democracies**. Always evidenced-based, we will exchange the latest research, best practises and experiences in strengthening democracy. We will bring proposals. We will bring research, policy papers and the people behind them. At the end of each summit, we will prepare our own declaration - our best ideas and advice on how and where to strengthen and defend democracy.

The Parliamentary Centre is prepared to go further with an initiative we call **“The Canadian Lab for Inclusive Democracy Everywhere.”** The Parliamentary Centre has proposed to the Government of Canada the *Canadian Lab* as a solution to undertake rapid and in-depth assessments, research and pilot initiatives, as well as focus Canadian thought leadership in the fields of peace, justice, human rights, inclusion, democracy, and governance. The lab would also ensure a resource pool to enhance efficient responses to the challenges of democratic backsliding.

If supported by the Government of Canada, the lab would be a further concrete step to fulfill the government’s commitment to expand the availability of Canadian expertise on democracy support. It would provide options for broader democracy programming on themes and countries of priority and help ensure timely, in-depth professional analysis and programming to support Global Affairs Canada.

### 3. Democracy Research

One of Parliamentary Centre's core values is taking an evidenced-based approach. The Parliamentary Centre believes that if we are to step up to the challenge of supporting democracies, our actions – and those of our partners and our governments – must be built on a foundation of evidence. In a world where perspectives and beliefs can vary widely, objective decision-making is more important than ever – prioritizing data and facts over notions, biases, and popular opinion.

#### And we have a role to play.

Every day, academics, institutions and thought leaders are publishing their best ideas and findings. Every day, democratic governments at all levels around the world are trying different varieties of democracy. Every day, national and international organizations are publishing new findings on the state of democracy and the factors that strengthen – and threaten it.

Canadian stakeholders need to know what the research says, what the data suggests, what the latest ideas are and what best practises are emerging. Leaders need to know what is happening, why, and what to do about it. There is no substitute for knowing.

To this end, the Parliamentary Centre will deepen our research activities – we intend to create a Democracy Research Library. Through newsletters and conferences (such as EngageParlDiplo and the Canadian Summit for Democracy), we will – on an ongoing basis – communicate the latest additions to our library – the latest democracy data, interviews, research, best practises and the best ideas. When stakeholders in democracy want to be in the know, our aim is to provide library access. Of course, staying on top of the latest in democracy research will underpin our own programs.



### Adapting our Business Model

The Parliamentary Centre has good reason to be proud. Over the past 56 years, we have supported over 120 legislatures at the regional, national, and sub-national levels. We have built knowledge and peer support networks, led numerous development programs and created innovative tools – all to such benefits as strengthening democratic institutions, supporting resilient and active civil societies, bolstering political participation and inclusion of women in

decision-making, and many other benefits. This is an impressive record – one that can be celebrated.

The Parliamentary Centre recognizes that if we are to strengthen our support for democracy, we must not only sharpen our focus on our core business. We must adapt our business model to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. This includes further funding diversification and a business development strategy that secures and supports ongoing growth, innovation and renewal. Our plan to adapt our business model has the following elements.

### **Diversification**

Over our history, including 24 years of international work, the Centre has implemented projects with the support of some 20 international and Canadian funders, including the World Bank, UN agencies, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the European Union, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Norway, Austria, the US Agency for International Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and many more. Throughout this journey, Global Affairs Canada has been our largest supporter.

Since 2014 the Centre has made a concerted effort to diversify funding sources. The result of our efforts is that funding from non-Canadian sources increased several-fold and became the largest source of revenues for the organization for a period of time. In the midst of our efforts, we learned that for diversification to be successful and sustainable, we need our government as a partner in our funding portfolio. This is why in the last several years we prioritized the reinforcement of our relationship with GAC. Having Canadian Government support gives the Centre important credibility with non-Canadian funders. In part, this is because the Parliamentary Centre operates in a field where similar organizations in other countries receive substantial support from their governments – it is seen as the norm. Indeed, armed with government backing, the Centre has a track record of attracting additional international support. As an example, the Parliamentary Centre was successful in multiplying more than three-fold an initial Canadian Government investment for our democracy program in Burkina Faso.

Our efforts to diversify our funding sources will continue – including a look at opportunities for memberships, subscriptions and increased sponsorships. Though to a lesser portion of our overall budget, we will also continue to seek the financial backing of the Government of Canada. We need the support!

### **Effective & Sustainable Programming**

Traditionally, the Centre has engaged local partner organizations to deliver in-country programming. While engaging local support can have its challenges, it also supports local capacity building. Local support must, however, be augmented with Canadian expertise. To this end, the Centre will strengthen its approach to engaging Canadian experts, including volunteers and partnerships with Canadian organizations to leverage their talents.



The Centre will also explore opportunities to sustain and expand upon what we have built in different programs. Part of this is ensuring full cost recovery. Another part is – where it makes sense – turning what we create into reusable, expandable and sustainable products that can make a real difference. Our current WLID program, discussed above, is one example. Playing to our strength as a convener and network builder, we will explore opportunities to expand the network and sustain it through memberships and sponsors – and expand the difference it makes.

Also on our agenda are plans to continue working with partners to offer needs assessments as a service – and where possible, to precede our programs with assessments. The Parliamentary Centre has a great deal of experience in conducting assessments – key for making the right decisions on where and how to bring the right Canadian support to international democracy challenges.

**Management Accountability**

The Parliamentary Centre understands that world-class programs and services require world-class administration behind the scenes. Solid financial management, human resources, communications and administrative management must stand firmly behind our front line. Clear tangible results and solid project management are part and parcel. Accordingly, our expertise within the Parliamentary Centre is not solely around business and democracy. Our expertise in administrative management – including members of our board – is indeed world-class. Levering that, our immediate priorities are strengthening financial and human resource management as well as communications.

We will continue to update our human resource policies and practices in order to retain and expand the unique in-house expertise and experience required for successful design and delivery of our international and domestic programs.

**One More Thing ...**

In the declaration signed by 74 countries at the 2023 International Summit for Democracy, summit leaders committed themselves to meet the rising challenges to democracy worldwide by strengthening the architectural elements – democratic institutions and processes. The Parliamentary Centre has always held the same view. We have been – and will continue to be – an organization that helps strengthen and support the institutions and actors that enable countries to reach their full democratic potential. We are committed building the essential architectural elements of democracy.



That said, we plan to investigate how we might go further. To better understand and address modern challenges to democracy, the Parliamentary Centre believes that in addition to focusing on institutions, we need to listen to what citizens are saying about democracy itself – a citizen-centred approach to democracy. We need to understand from citizens what democracy means to them and what elements of democracy are most important to them. We must listen to what citizens have to say about where they see their democracy is performing – and where it is not. We need to hear about citizens’ priorities for change.

Over the coming months, the Parliamentary Centre will conduct further research and explore this idea with Canadian Universities, partners, associates and other Canadian organizations concerns about democracy – we will see where the trail leads.

So what’s next? Next is executing this plan. It is continuing to diversify funding and sharpening the focus on our core business. It is moving forward to engage Canadian partners, sponsors and governments to design and launch our Canadian Summit For Democracy. Next is strengthening communication and other management areas. Next is building and sharing our library of research and leading ideas on democracy. To these ends, more detailed planning is underway.

And we can’t wait!

