



From the Editor / L. Ian MacDonald

Democratic Reform

Welcome to our special issue on democratic reform, which promises to be a major agenda item in the 42nd Parliament.

For openers, there's the Liberals' repeated vow that the 2015 election would be the last to be held under the first-past-the-post voting system. Contributing Writer David Mitchell considers a menu of voting options, from some form of proportional representation to preferential voting to a single transferable vote. He also looks at the question of mandatory voting, as in Australia, as well as on-line voting. "An emerging generation of young Canadians," he writes, "seems intent on being able to exercise their democratic franchise in the same manner in which they now increasingly live: online."

Jennifer Smith, former chair of political science at Dalhousie, offers a spirited defence of the FPTP system, which, she asserts, has served Canada well for a century and a half. "Those who support a robust version of PR in the expectation that it will underpin progressive coalition governments forever," she writes, "had best be careful what they wish for."

Pollster Frank Graves of EKOS has done extensive research over the years on public trust in politicians and the political system. He finds that while trust reached historic lows under the Harper government, Canadians have a high degree of optimism for the new Trudeau government.

"Six in 10 Canadians hold a positive outlook on the health of democracy, which may reflect just how far basic barometers of trust in government and democracy had descended under Harper's watch," Graves writes. "What is remarkable about this indicator is how this newfound optimism is shared by Canadians of every region, gender, age group, and educational cohort." Asked about parliamentary

reform during the week the House was sitting in December, 41 per cent of Canadians told EKOS they preferred a form of PR, while 25 per cent preferred either FPTP or a preferential ballot.

Bruce Carson looks at the controversial Fair Elections Act and finds that measures designed by the Conservatives to suppress voter turnout "actually had the exact opposite effect as they galvanized both university students and Canada's indigenous population to obtain the identification required under the Act and vote in numbers never before seen in a federal election."

University of Ottawa professor and constitutional author Adam Dodek considers what to do about the Senate, beginning with Justin Trudeau's creation of an Independent Advisory Board to recommend non-partisan appointments by the PM. The larger challenge, Dodek writes, is that "the Senate is not an expert panel of independent, diverse voices, although it may serve this function at times, and serve it well. The Senate is a critical and constitutional part of the day-to-day process of legislating in Canada."

Conservative MP Michael Chong, author of the Reform Act, looks at several aspects of democratic reform, from the election of committee chairs to whether a new parliamentary election system should be submitted to a referendum.

In our *Canada and the World* section, veteran diplomat Jeremy Kinsman looks at Trudeau's out-of-the-gate world tour. The new prime minister's first weeks in government featured a whirlwind of global summits and conferences. And not all of it was scripted. "At the G20," he writes, "terrorism in Paris launched a wide-ranging discussion of how to confront and defeat ISIL, while engaging the global refugee crisis, so aggravated by the seemingly intractable Syrian

civil war." Trudeau also used the G20, APEC and Commonwealth summits, as well as COP21 in Paris, as occasions to build his network with international leaders and to declare that "Canada is back" on the world stage.

Across the floor from the Liberals, the Conservatives now sit as the Opposition. Contributing Writer and long-time Conservative strategist Yaroslav Baran looks at the Tories after the fall, and considers their prospects for renewal. "The first tenet is that there are no quick fixes in politics," he writes. "Second, Parliament matters." The Conservatives "must take their Official Opposition role seriously and put in the work." And third, tone, which Rona Ambrose has already transformed with "sunny ways" of her own.

From Paris and COP21, Contributing Writer Velma McColl takes us through the marathon negotiation of 195 countries that finally led to the Paris Agreement on December 12. Green Party Leader Elizabeth May shares her thoughts on the climate change accord in a guest column from Paris.

We also offer three interesting business pieces in this issue. Barrick Gold President and CEO Kelvin Dushnisky shares his thoughts on his company's corporate makeover in response to the challenge of declining gold prices. Former CN vice-president Jean Patenaude looks at the unintended consequences of railway regulatory legislation. And CIBC President and CEO Victor Dodig writes that innovation is the key to growing the economy. "To put it simply," he writes, "innovators are all about finding new and better ways of creating value."

Finally, columnist Don Newman writes about last call at Hy's and the closing of an Ottawa institution, one where pols and journos alike checked their guns at the door. Cheers. **P**