



Letter from the Editor

In this edition of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* we turn our eye to what one contributor calls “the country’s most dramatic, if accidental, parliamentary reform”: constituency offices. With well over 1,000 constituency offices at the federal, provincial and territorial levels combined, many people across the country will have at least some familiarity with these institutions – whether simply passing by on a street or actively seeking assistance from their constituency office in person, by phone or by mail.

But, likely reflecting the heterogeneous country in which they reside and the members which they serve, there is great diversity amongst these offices. In a series of interviews and roundtables, we present some of the unique ways in which parliamentarians have organized these offices, how yet others fulfill their representative roles without them, and the particular challenges presented by geography and population density.

Many of these offices, with their diverse forms and functions, seem to have evolved (or perhaps devolved) into the de facto front line for certain ministries or the bureaus of last resort for constituents

who have hit bureaucratic roadblocks and hope their parliamentarian can act as their champion or ombudsperson. Some members of the scholarly community use articles in this issue to note that these developments make constituency offices an excellent place for experiential learning for young political scientists, but perhaps signal some greater malaise in our political system. Is constituency work alone the best use of parliamentarians’ time? Why is it that so many parliamentarians get so much satisfaction from adopting the “fixer” role in their constituency offices while the public’s perception of MPs as being detached and unresponsive to community needs has grown? Should parliamentarians re-imagine constituency offices as spaces for civic engagement to deepen and enrich the country’s political conversation?

While this edition will offer a few entry points for discussion, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* welcomes and encourages parliamentarians to publicize other innovations within the country’s political system occurring at the local level, outside of the legislative assemblies. Please consider submitting a letter to the Editor or a future article to apprise your colleagues of these types of developments.

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Editor

