

## From polls to populists, we surf the pre-writ tsunami

By Brian Kieran  
OOTD editor

Did I mention I love polls? As a former political hack who lived for the next election road show, I became addicted to the roll-out of poll after poll in the pre-writ period. I was most pleased when my gut and the polls agreed and most distraught when they diverged.

With a fall federal election on the horizon, we are already being inundated with polls that canvas everything from our faith in our parties and their beleaguered leaders to our faith in our rambunctious democracy with its territorial tensions and tenuous accommodations.

Here's a survey I found as I was planning this edition of OOTD: Proof Strategies says our trust in governments has dropped four per cent this year after holding steady for the last four. Only four in 10 of those surveyed said they trust their prime minister, while just over a third said they trust their premiers. Greg MacEachern, Proof Strategies' senior vice president, said this trend was reflected in recent elections in which five provincial legislatures changed hands in the last year.

My addiction notwithstanding, the efficacy of polling has been the subject of much scrutiny. Polling originally relied on phone bank access to Canadians through their landlines, but the home telephone on the kitchen counter has become an endangered species. Further, we seem to be in a period when "the average Canadian" just does not want to be pestered by pollsters.

Barely ahead of the silly season, to get a handle on the state of the art of political polling, I offer two perspectives from polling icons Angus Reid and Bruce Anderson on pages 6 and 7 respectively.

Any discussion about the efficacy of polling would not be complete without a parallel examination of what the pollsters - and the media in general - are reflecting. That would be a political cycle of cynicism, hyperpartisan excess and populism that is downright depressing for those of us who have faith in our system of governance and the vast majority



*The Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill is fueled by natural gas from western Canada where environmentalists and indigenous activists are protesting pipeline expansions and carbon emissions from tar sands. Last year, the federal government announced that it was exploring a number of options to reduce the environmental impact of the flame, including replacing the fire with LED lights.*

of its participants. To dig deeper into these phenomena, OOTD has called upon the sobering reflections of *The Globe and Mail's* Gary Mason (Page 8) and research by the Samara Centre for Democracy (Page 10).

I hope these articles provide some context for the tsunami of pre-writ polls and political hype that is gathering momentum. And, I hope these ideas will spark some feedback from the many armchair political veterans who read these pages.

*(The Editor's Desk continued on Page 2.)*

Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

# Thank You and Miscellany

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# From the Editor's Desk

On the back two pages of this issue of OOTD, readers will find an easy-to-clip registration form for this year's AFMLABC banquet at Government House Sept. 20.

This year we are fortunate to have former CKNW reporter George Garrett as our speaker. George is currently enjoying a wealth of publicity with the publication of his best-selling memoir *George Garrett: Intrepid Reporter*.

I want to thank *Georgia Straight* writer Charlie Smith for sharing his compelling review of George's book (Page 4).

In retirement, George continues to give back to his community. George became a cancer driver for the Canadian Cancer Society before his wife, Joan, came down with Alzheimer's in 2010.

CKNW commentator Bruce Allen says: "Years ago George Garrett was the number one reporter for CKNW. After 43 years George may not be chasing police cars or ambulances any more, but he is out there chasing dollars for a very good cause. George is the Chief Fundraiser for a group of dedicated citizens who spend a lot of their spare time as volunteer cancer drivers. It seems that not a week goes by without hearing about cancer sufferers or people who have learned they have this insidious disease. Treatment for cancer can be painful, debilitating. Your energy is gone, your ability to get around is impossible without help. Defunded by the Canadian Cancer Society two years ago (now there's a head scratcher) these volunteers have picked up the slack."

While we are talking about retirees who continue to participate in the life of their communities, I am pleased, as ever, to publish a column by Jim Hume, "The Old Islander." At 95, Jim continues to spin a great tale, and we are lucky to have him still kicking in our literary stable. This month Jim traces the decline of the written communication since the 1400s when Gutenberg unveiled his revolutionary moveable type. Jim reminds us, in the words of author Mitchell Stephens, that we "are losing news of our neighbourhoods ... and risk losing those neighbourhoods and our identity as participants in them."

*The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.*

*Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produced in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office. Hugh Curtis ably helmed this publication up through May 2014.*

# President's Report

Well, it is that time of year again. The spring session of the Legislature has risen, and for those of us who have been elected before we know what that means; the circuit of BBQs and summer fairs is underway. What will make this time more interesting is that it is also the lead-up to a fall federal election and this issue of OOTD helps set the stage for the pre-writ discourse.

As former MLAs, regardless of our party affiliation, I think we all hope for a few things to occur this next federal election: positive debate on issues, civil public discourse, and a healthy increase in voter turnout. Democracy is like a muscle; if it is not utilized, it can atrophy. Canada has a proud history as a healthy democracy; a beacon for other parts of the world. But it is up to us as citizens to ensure it remains healthy.

As an association, we can encourage people to become involved, learn about the issues, attend all candidates' meetings, volunteer for a campaign and, most importantly, exercise one's right to vote. Voter turnout in 2015 was 68.5 per cent, which was the largest since 1993. I think setting a goal to break the 70 per cent barrier is not unrealistic.

Our annual dinner on Sept. 20 at Government House in Victoria promises to be the event of the year! Intrepid long-time CKNW reporter George Garrett will be our guest speaker. September in Victoria is lovely, and there is no better setting for an autumn evening than to be hosted by the Lieutenant Government at Government House. Plan for a weekend getaway to the Island around this terrific dinner. Tickets are limited, so order yours soon to ensure a spot!

We look forward to seeing you there!

Jeff Bray, President



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# *Intrepid Reporter* ... riveting tales of a bygone era

By Charlie Smith  
*Georgia Straight*

There's a revealing anecdote deep in retired BC radio reporter George Garrett's memoir, *George Garrett: Intrepid Reporter*.

After six members of the extended Johnson-Bentley family had gone missing for months, the CKNW journalist was told by a "contact" that their bodies had been found in the back of a camper in the BC Interior.

The RCMP in Kamloops wouldn't confirm the tip.

After Garrett shared the name of his source with then news director Warren Barker, the story was approved. It went out over the Lower Mainland airwaves.

But a staffer at the local station in Kamloops, CHNL, was in a quandary - the Mounties were refusing to comment. So, the station contacted CKNW senior editor John McKittrick to determine whether the tape should be played.

"Whom do you believe - Garrett or the cops?" McKittrick asked, according to Garrett's book. That was enough to convince CHNL to report the news.

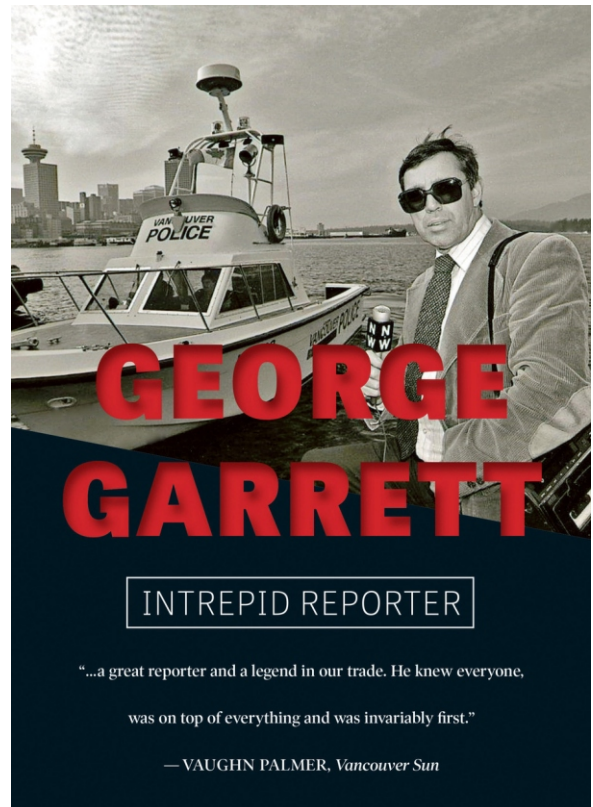
Garrett was later horrified to learn that family members had not been notified of the mass murder and only learned about it over the radio.

It was something he would never have done deliberately - he was not that kind of reporter. In fact, Garrett was respected by his peers for his fundamental decency: "A lovely, sweet, ethical and generous man," in the words of former colleague Karen Tankard.

But, the sad tale of the Johnson-Bentley murders also reflected the rush of adrenaline that came to reporters with a major scoop in the heyday of Vancouver radio. There was immense pressure to be first. And from the 1950s to the 1990s, no one could match Garrett when it came to breaking blockbuster stories like this.

*George Garrett: Intrepid Reporter* regales readers with true tales of crime and mayhem, political intrigue, protests, and amusing undercover escapades during his storied career. There's even a visit to a nudist colony.

Garrett is a clever man, which was repeatedly reflected by the techniques he employed to obtain exclusives. He brought flowers to a woman in hospital who had been in the midst of a prison uprising. He played cribbage with former Surrey Mayor Ed McKitka who was on trial for corruption, just as the jury was determining the politician's fate. Garrett even contacted judges to ask for their help from time to time.



When Garrett used to visit the old RCMP E Division headquarters at West 37th Avenue and Heather Street in Vancouver, he would scan the sign-in book to see who else had visited the building.

On one occasion, he noticed the name of a former NDP cabinet minister, Dave Stupich, then embroiled in a scandal involving a Nanaimo charity. So, Garrett waited outside the building for Stupich to emerge, seizing on the opportunity to ask why he was there.

"I knew very well he could not give me an answer beyond what his lawyer had told him to say: 'No comment.' Often that kind of response speaks volumes to listeners," Garrett writes. "It was obvious Stupich had something to hide."

On another occasion, Garrett slipped into Government House in Victoria even though reporters were barred from the event. He pulled this off by arriving in a limousine, wearing a dark three-piece suit while carrying the type of briefcase used by lawyers. Security let him through.

He then snuck into an upstairs bedroom, found a phone, and started filing reports to his radio station explaining how he had managed to enter the premises.

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After a while, he decided to drop his cover and hung around outside the washroom. He knew that this was where politicians would inevitably show up.

Naturally, Garrett had his microphone ready when he spotted the then premier, Bill Bennett, and asked a question about the meeting taking place. Bennett wondered how Garrett had managed to enter the building. "Surreptitiously, sir," Garrett replied. At that point, he was escorted out.

Lighter moments like this are offset by gripping stories of tragedy, perhaps most notably in Garrett's recollections of the ghastly serial killer, Clifford Olson, who terrorized British Columbia in the early 1980s.

Garrett learned that Olson had demanded \$10,000 for the location of every child and youth he had murdered. But Garrett held off reporting this fact until after Olson had pleaded guilty to the crimes.

After Olson was locked up, one of the managers at his station encouraged Garrett to try to obtain an interview. "I politely refused," Garrett writes. "I felt our listeners had heard enough about Clifford Olson."

Other heartbreaking murder stories are given vivid treatment in the book, including one committed by a former colleague of Garrett's at CKNW Radio. For British Columbians who remember these dastardly crimes, it's like living through them all over again.

Garrett was almost always on extremely friendly terms with the police. That led to countless stories because he was so trusted by many cops on the beat. And late in his career, he paid back the favour by reporting on how an unpopular chief of the Vancouver Police Department, Bruce Chambers, had been pulled over and given a roadside suspension in Coquitlam.

That, along with Garrett's stories about poor morale at the VPD, led to the chief's departure, much to the delight of some old-guard members of the force.

Garrett, like another journalism giant of that era, Jack Webster, was born poor, moved to BC with meagre means, and unwittingly became a member of the establishment in his adopted province.

In Garrett's case, he was a dustbowl kid who grew up in the Dirty Thirties in Saskatchewan. After arriving on the West Coast, Garrett thrived in radio news through persistence, charm, guile, and kindness.

U.S. politics chronicler Theodore White once said great reporters share four qualities: superb memory, keen

intellect, relentless curiosity, and an ability to synthesize disparate information. He might as well have been describing Garrett, who also brought a fair amount of humour to the CKNW newsroom.

A short documentary by George Orr captured his final day on the job when Garrett revealed that a high-profile BC politician, Gordon Wilson, was about to cross the floor to become an NDP cabinet minister.

In his private life, Garrett coped with the devastating loss of his only son in a canoeing accident, the emotional ride of a daughter's successful battle with cancer, and his patient wife's struggle with Alzheimer's disease. These are also revealed in his memoir with heartache and wisdom.

Garrett was no revolutionary. Unlike some in journalism, he didn't set out to change the world or challenge the public mindset around the distribution of power in society, environmental degradation, or the rise of U.S. militarism.

But through his own curiosity, he repeatedly quenched the public's thirst for knowledge about what was really going on in the courts and political backrooms, and with many of the biggest criminal investigations in BC history. And he did this in a decent and fair-minded way, which won him many friends.

I like to think of Garrett as a friendly teacher - a man who taught his younger colleagues how to behave on the beat and someone who educated the public about the legal and political systems in place at the time.

Garrett is also a damn good writer. Decades in radio clearly taught him how to get to the point quickly while creating, as he likes to say, "theatre of the mind." It's as important in books as it is in radio - something Garrett clearly understands. In fact, Garrett's many fans may wonder why he waited until he was in his 80s to get around to writing his first book.

The answer comes in the introduction.

"I had been retired for more than a decade when it crossed my mind that my four grandchildren, then in their teens, might one day like to read about what their 'Papa' had done in his life," Garrett writes.

The grandchildren can be proud of their Papa, who spends much of his time nowadays raising money for the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society. And in case anyone's wondering, he employs the same persistence in this work that he demonstrated over more than 40 years on the beat as a radio reporter.

# Judge online polling by real-world accuracy, not academic theory

By Angus Reid

My commitment to the online methodology of polling came from an epiphany of sorts that I had at the turn of the Millennium when non-participation rates for conventional polling were starting to top 90 per cent. It became clear to me that we must find a better way to bring potential survey respondents into the research process - especially in a world that places more emphasis than ever on personal privacy and where robo-calls and even live interviewer engagement are seen as spam.

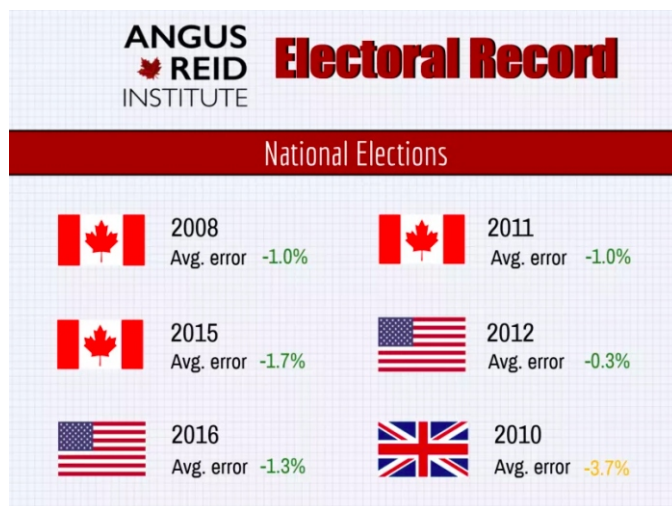
If enough care and attention (and dollars) are committed to this task, it is possible to build very large panels of “double opt-in” respondents - that is, people who choose to be part of the panel and then choose whether to participate in the surveys offered to them. With the proper investment, these panels can be large enough to represent each of the major regions and segments of a given country. I started building panels in Canada, the U.S., and Britain.

The online panel offers some significant advantages over other forms of research. Surveys can be completed on mobile devices at the respondent's convenience and can include pictures and video to obtain a more realistic response context. Most of the investment in online research goes into maintaining and growing a large group of potential respondents - rather than paying for interviewers in call centres.

Because online polls involve sampling from a pre-recruited group willing to take a survey, some have attacked this method, claiming that the sample is not truly random and therefore the margin of error typically put out when a poll is released (e.g. “accurate +/- 4 per cent, 19 times out of 20”) cannot be used.

While this is technically correct about online polls, it is arguable that no poll today should use a margin of error, given the very serious problems of low completion - and high refusal - rates that inhibit a truly random sample.

Adding to the complexity and confusion is a lack of understanding on the part of many reporters and editors who cite polls, and then find themselves invariably skeptical of any poll that doesn't report a margin of error. In this environment, it is more appropriate to judge pollsters on their real-world performance than through the use of abstract mathematical models. We are living in a



time of rapidly changing communication technology and, unfortunately, the standards used to assess polling are rooted in the wrong century.

In the polling world, there are two types of measures to assess the quality of election polling. The first, and most important, is picking the eventual winner. The second involves the level of accuracy surrounding the final projection. In golf parlance, it's “how close did we get to the pin?”

On the first of the standards - picking the eventual winner - my accuracy has been 95 per cent. Ironically the two we missed were closest to my home in Vancouver: Alberta in 2012 and British Columbia in 2013. (Pollsters using all methods missed BC in 2013, suggesting something other than polling method problems were at work in that unusual election.)

In terms of precision, my average is better than three percentage points. In some cases, such as the 2011 federal contest and the 2012 U.S. presidential election, we were off by one point or less. In other cases, we projected the winner, but our margin of error was much higher.

With the plethora of polling methods currently being deployed, it can be difficult to sort out results based on quality. Rather than leaving this determination to theoretical models, it makes more sense to judge the pollsters by their record.

# Polling on polling: neither flattering nor intensely critical

By Bruce Anderson and David Coletto  
Abacus Data

In a considerable number of recent voting experiences, questions have been raised about the accuracy of polls and the professionalism of pollsters.

In our latest nationwide study, we decided to take a look at confidence in polling, asking questions about the accuracy of polls, the professional ethics of pollsters, and the way in which the media reports polls. The results paint a picture that is neither all that flattering nor intensely critical.

Only 36 per cent say the professionalism and ethics of pollsters are excellent or good. But only 11 per cent say poor or very poor. The rest (41 per cent) give pollsters an “acceptable” grade. Slightly weaker numbers are found for the “accuracy of polls” with 30 per cent saying it is excellent or good, while 19 per cent say accuracy is poor.

On the way media cover polls, responses are in the same ballpark: 30 per cent say they are excellent or good, 18 per cent poor, and the plurality say “acceptable.”

Looking at some of the subgroups of the population reveals:

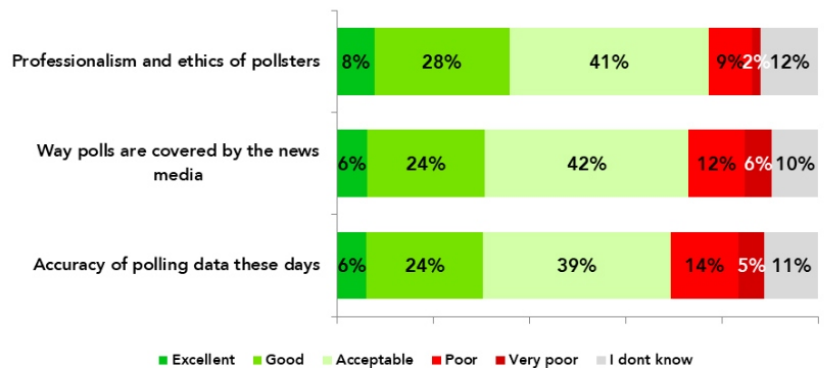
- Skepticism about the professionalism of pollsters is higher than average among Albertans with 17 per cent giving pollsters a poor grade. Quebecers are at the opposite end of the spectrum with 52 per cent giving an excellent or good rating.
- When it comes to the accuracy of polls, differences are more muted although Conservative voters are more likely than others to give a poor grade (28 per cent).
- On the way the media cover polls, Albertans are particularly disappointed with only 18 per cent offering an excellent or good rating and 29 per cent offering a poor or very poor opinion. Conservative voters are also nine points more likely than average to give the media a poor rating for the way they cover polls.

**Bruce Anderson says:** “The results may offer comfort to pollsters in that the public has not completely soured on the role of polling in politics - but this is hardly a ringing endorsement of either the accuracy or the professional ethics of those of us who work in this field. Instead, I see these findings as a signal that confidence in our work needs to be earned constantly, and there is no deep well of accumulated credibility upon which to draw.”

**David Coletto says:** “For the past few years, apparent polling misses in different elections have given not only our industry plenty of reason to reflect on how we approach our trade but also, as this survey suggests, many Canadians as well. Our reputation is constantly being tested by the work we put out and how we serve our clients. The reputation of polling in Canada is not in a crisis or under siege, but we can't assume the broader public isn't watching, reading, or listening to our work with a critical mind.”

**(Abacus Data offers global research with a strong focus on customer service, attention to detail and value-added insight. The team combines the experience of Chairman Bruce Anderson, one of Canada's leading research executives for two decades, with the energy, creativity and research expertise of CEO David Coletto.)**

## POLLING IN CANADA



ABACUS DATA

How would you rate each of the following when it comes to polling in Canada?

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# Canada has a national unity crisis - we just don't know it

By Gary Mason,  
National Affairs Columnist  
*The Globe and Mail*

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has suggested that a failure to build more pipelines could incite a national unity crisis. Too late; there already is one.

Although we may not realize it, the moment in which we find ourselves is beyond worrisome. We face a common enemy in climate change amid a hyperpartisan age that almost by definition, means our political leaders can't come together to find a common solution.

Tearing down your enemy is more important than reaching across the aisle to build consensus. In this type of war, like all others, truth becomes a casualty. Today, we see politicians everywhere, of all stripes, lying with impunity. Civility has largely disappeared from the political arena, replaced with a viciousness and vileness incubated by social media.

Rational discussion about most issues has become even more unattainable, and now the new norm is a general discourse that pits Canadian against Canadian.

Mr. Kenney talks about the rise of alienation in his province, one he exploited so successfully on the campaign trail. Rather than attempt to temper hostilities, however, the new premier has breathed life into the embers of Western separatism at every turn. And he hasn't been alone.

I look at the current mess in which we find ourselves and see little hope, quite honestly.

In the last federal election, the Liberals ran on a hard environmental agenda that put Canada's response to the global climate crisis at the forefront. They campaigned against the Northern Gateway pipeline and promised to ban tanker traffic along ecologically-sensitive areas of the West Coast. They promised to bring in tougher rules around resource development projects. They promised to bring in a carbon tax.

And they won a significant majority running on that platform.

Now Mr. Kenney and others want the Liberals to abandon those pledges and effectively give Alberta everything it wants (Or we'll separate!). And it's been made clear that one new pipeline won't be enough.

This at the same time as Environment Canada has revealed that some of the oil sands are releasing an average of about one-third more carbon dioxide per barrel than has been previously reported. And a shocking new report by a panel of international scientists estimates one million species of plants and animals are at risk of extinction, some within a few decades or less, unless action is taken immediately to stifle the effects of climate change.

But so what, right? That's only an issue for people who believe climate change is real, or who believe we should do something about our emissions problems, even if India isn't doing enough about theirs. Beyond that, as you may have heard, Albertans, by dint of their wealth, have contributed more in federal income taxes over the years than those living in other provinces. So, the province deserves to be cut a break on that basis alone, or so the argument from politicians there goes.

Some have also suggested that allowing the provinces to independently address the issue of climate change would be best, with Ottawa playing a more benign co-ordinator's role. Of course, this is a world in which you trust people like Ontario Premier Doug Ford to take environmental action seriously. As if.

Peter Lougheed's name gets thrown around a lot these days. He, of course, is the Alberta premier who stood up so successfully against Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's ill-conceived National Energy Program (NEP). Mr. Lougheed "turned off the taps" of oil heading to the rest of the country in 1980 and within a week, the NEP was effectively gone as a policy.

Mr. Kenney is threatening to do the same.



He could. Although he'd have to not just do it to BC, but the rest of Canada, which would mean putting the screws to his buddy Mr. Ford in the process. I'm not sure Mr. Kenney has the appetite to do that. Beyond that, I would suggest that Mr. Lougheed did his thing in a moment in time completely at odds with the one in which we now find ourselves.

Pierre Trudeau was wrongly trying to control Alberta oil for economic reasons. Today, the pipeline debate is enveloped in a broader, more heated discussion about climate change. And there are many who no longer accept that business interests trump all.

Mr. Kenney can stomp his feet, and threaten to hold his breath all he wants, but this won't change

the fact that growing numbers believe there should be compromise when balancing the needs of the environment and the economy.

Even if Mr. Kenney's friend, federal Conservative Party Leader Andrew Scheer, becomes the next prime minister, he's unlikely to be successful in taking Canada back in time. Instead, he'll get an up-close look at Canada's unity crisis.

(Gary Mason began his journalism career in BC in 1981, working as a summer intern for *Canadian Press*. Gary worked for the *Victoria Times Colonist* before joining the *Vancouver Sun*, where he worked for 19 years in a variety of roles, including legislative bureau chief, city editor, and deputy managing editor before he began writing a popular sports column in 1997. He joined *The Globe and Mail* in 2005 as a national affairs columnist based in Vancouver.)



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# Populist leaders not always good for democracy

The word populism is on everyone's lips. It's blamed for bringing President Donald Trump to power and causing Brexit. Recent media and political commentary, including from senior leaders on the left and right, suggests that populism is growing in Canada too - even that it is transforming our politics.

This report, by the Samara Centre for Democracy, uses new data to help answer the question: Is Canada having a populist moment? And if so, why is that a problem?

What is populism? Populism is a style of doing politics, and also a set of attitudes and beliefs about politics and society. The substantive goals of populists vary from country to country, but the basic message of populism is clear. Populist leaders describe politics as a conflict between two groups, with elites (people with economic and political power) ruling over The Real People.

Populists say that elites must be swept away, leaving government to be led by someone who truly represents The People. Only The People have legitimacy, and little or nothing should stand in the way of a leader who represents them. Populism is sometimes conflated with other attitudes that frequently come with it, like anti-immigration sentiment, or economic anxiety. The relationship between these different sets of attitudes is important, but it's also important to distinguish populism.

Not every xenophobe is a populist and vice versa. So why is populism a problem for democracy? Isn't democracy supposed to be about The People? Yes, democracy is about all people and a healthy democracy requires much more than an election every four years. A healthy democracy requires regular engagement from a wide swath of citizens, or it does, indeed, become a plaything of the elite. So why is populism seen in such a negative light?

Populist leaders on the left and right have won elections claiming to work for The People. But once in power, they have used their attack on the elite as a pretext for going after political rivals, journalists, judges, academics, and others who stand in their way. A recent analysis of populist administrations found that they were uniquely likely to cause damage to democratic institutions.



In other words, populism is used and abused by authoritarian leaders. Populist leaders don't emerge from nowhere. Sometimes they're successful because they're responding to real anger about the way politics has been working for regular people. They capitalize on a truth that citizens can see: That politics often does reward insiders and keeps others away from power. Citizens are not wrong to want a leader who promises them access to power.

So, whether populism is a self-serving style of doing politics or a reflection of genuine anger, it can signal a poorly-performing democracy.

Is Canada having a populist moment? Every two years, the Samara Centre releases its Democracy 360 report card on the health of Canadian democracy, based on the attitudes and perceptions of Canadians. This year we added a short set of questions that measure some aspects of populist thought, like political discontent at politicians and a preference for decision-making by ordinary citizens. We specifically chose some questions that had been asked before in Canada, so that we could look for changes or trends that would suggest a populist revolt. We also tried to mirror questions about political discontent that have been found to go along with support for populist parties in Europe.

To start, we asked Canadians if they agree with the following statement: I don't think the government cares much what people like me think. In 2019, about 60 per cent of Canadians agreed with this statement, indicating a (perhaps deserved) cynicism towards government. More than half of the population feels government doesn't care about them, let alone listens to them. But this is far from the most negative Canadians have felt

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towards the government; in the mid-1990s, 75 per cent of Canadians felt this way.

We also asked Canadians if they agree or disagree: Those elected to parliament soon lose touch with the people. Again, in 2019, a strong majority of Canadians agreed - 63 per cent. But while a chasm remains between ordinary people and elites, this is not a recent development. Indeed, more Canadians felt far apart from parliamentarians 20 years ago. In both cases, the long-term picture looks similar. It shows that Canadians have been alienated from our politics for a long time. But cynicism and frustration peaked in the early 1990s and have actually receded since. In other words, as dissatisfied as Canadians are, it is very hard to conclude that Canadians have, in recent years, turned radically against institutions and elites.

That's not to say that Canadians are happy with our political leadership. As 63 per cent of Canadians feel that politicians are out of touch, it is clear they are not. That number also masks loud pockets of concentrated dissatisfaction - and attitudes can also change quickly. However, there are also indications that most Canadians do not believe that so-called elites should be thrown out wholesale.

Along with anger toward the political establishment, populism is thought to include "people-centrism" - a preference for control by ordinary people. Our survey found some division on this question, but nearly six in 10 Canadians disagree that "ordinary people would do a better job of solving the country's problems than elected officials." Populists also hold a more "majoritarian" vision of democracy. They believe government should do what a majority decides, and it should not have to compromise with those who hold opposing viewpoints.

Additionally, they don't believe that government should be constrained by rights and freedoms, which exist to protect individuals and minorities from the will of the majority. Our survey found a large minority (40 per cent) of Canadians agree that "the will of the majority should always prevail, even over the rights of minorities."

This suggests that the compromises, nuance, and limits on majority rule, which are so essential to a

sophisticated liberal democracy, may be unwelcome to a significant number of Canadians. But this, too, is not new. For example, in 2011, approximately 60 per cent of Canadians said "letting the majority decide" was more important in a democracy than "protecting the needs and rights of minorities." And in fact, 10 years before that, around 70 per cent of Canadians prioritized majority decision-making over minority rights.

Taken together, what do the responses to these simple questions tell us? Yes, Canadians are alienated from their political leadership, and significant minorities of Canadians hold populist views. But based on levels of political discontent, as seen in measures of satisfaction and trust - a critical ingredient in populism - the Canadian people have not entered a unique populist moment. Instead, across a range of indicators we repeatedly measure, the Samara Centre has found that Canadians' attitudes toward politics have broadly stayed the same or improved over the last five years.

So, we're good then? Not quite. First, these are high levels of alienation, even if they aren't notably higher now than in the past. The Samara Centre is not content with a status quo in which most Canadians believe the government doesn't care about them.

Second, our democracy has very real problems, including centralized control, degraded legislatures, unhealthy political parties, and low voter turnout. These problems require solutions, which citizens should demand. Populist leaders may not always be good for democracy, but critical, engaged, and involved citizens are.

Third, while these survey questions indicate that Canadians are not turning strongly against elites, political leaders can still use the rhetoric of populism to advance their own interests. If our politics has taken on stronger populist overtones, that change is ironically coming from elites - politicians themselves.

**(The Samara Centre for Democracy is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy.)**

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# From Gutenberg downhill to “www.com”

By Jim Hume,  
The Old Islander

It all started in 1440 when, after two years of experimenting, Gutenberg unveiled his moveable type and a printing press capable of reproducing identical copies of books and news reports on paper.

It is true the Chinese had invented paper and printing centuries earlier, but it was Gutenberg's inventions that launched an explosion of knowledge that remained unmatched until 1989 when the World Wide Web via the Internet released the great tsunami of information that now threatens to overwhelm us.

There had been moveable type before Gutenberg. Both China and Korea had used clay or porcelain type to print on paper, and China claims to have published the world's first book - *Diamond Sutra* - in 868 A.D. In a similar, but heavily contracted time frame, the Internet had been around for close to half a century before “www.com” became household slang and now threatens to make extinct words on paper that have been a vital part of our lives for centuries.

It was Gutenberg's press that brought the world print reports, so some historians claim, of the discovery of America by Columbus. The world, once a mysterious place to all but sailors and traders, could now be envisioned and enjoyed by anyone who could read or listen to a reader.

The advent of the printed page was as sensational and dramatic in its day as the Internet explosion - and to the general populace, just as bewildering. The world in which news had been transmitted by word of mouth or official decree poster was suddenly awash with single sheet pamphlets spouting every opinion known to man with truth and fiction intertwined and proclaimed as fact.

The pamphleteers, who sometimes made sense but were often gloriously inaccurate and irresponsible, survive as 21<sup>st</sup> Century “bloggers.”

From that first confusion of voices sprang the first

organized newspapers that (is there nothing new under the sun?) leaned heavily on horror stories to attract readers to more mundane items on politics and politicians. In his magnificent book *A History of News*, Mitchell Stephens provides documented “news” stories presented sombrely and seriously as fact. My favourite is from 1614 under the byline of “AR” who prefaced his story on “a strange and monstrous Serpent (or Dragon)” living in a forest “only thirtie (cct) miles from London” with an apology to his readers that he “would send better news if he had it.”

AR would be right at home on the Internet where most bloggers parade their theories as facts and “the Net” - surely a 21<sup>st</sup> Century dragon - comes ever closer to silencing what has been the reasonably steady voice of serious newspapers for centuries.

Not that modern newspapers don't deserve a shake. They have failed to meet the electronic challenge by trying to match its speed when they should have held their ground as bastions of sober insight. The Internet is geared to a world in such a hurry that it's happy to be fed crumbs of twittering information and fragments of illiterate thumb-texted messages. Newspapers have the singular ability to freeze-frame time, stop the clock, slow down the thought processes and give their readers time to read, mark, and inwardly digest.

Mitchell Stephens puts it this way: “It is now possible to know what they served for dinner last night at the White House, but it is becoming more difficult to know why an ambulance pulled up at the house down the road ... (we can) learn exactly why the space shuttle exploded, but (it is) more difficult to find out what's being built on the lot around the corner ... we are losing news of our neighbourhoods ... (and) risk losing those neighbourhoods and our identity as participants in them.”

And to that, I say “amen.”

# Member News

Please send news about your activities to [ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com) for the next newsletter.

## Where are they now?

Each issue we ask a former Member of the Legislative Assembly a series of questions. What drew them to public service; what lessons have they taken away; and, most important, what are they doing now.

This month we welcome Charlie Wyse, a career high school teacher and veteran city councillor, who represented the riding of Cariboo South for the NDP from 2005 to 2009.



### What prompted you to seek public office?

Local issues in my community led me to look for solutions. Public office is one way to implement change, so I sought election at the municipal level, getting elected as a city councillor. I served on Williams Lake City Council for 23 years. During that time, I also served as the city's representative to the Cariboo Regional District and on the Health Council. All of this experience led me to enter provincial politics and serve a term as MLA for Cariboo South.

### Which political figure most influenced you?

Dave Barrett, primarily because of his compassion for those people in our society who are less able to look after themselves.

### Was it hard making the transition from private life to public life?

My time in public life preceded social media, so I did not have to deal with that form of public exposure. My community has always recognized that public figures have private lives. While they didn't always agree with me, people have always been respectful in resolving issues and never attacked me on a personal level.

### What was your biggest challenge returning to private life?

Adjusting to having so much time for my family and myself.

### What is the biggest lesson that has stuck with you since being an MLA?

I am in awe of the dedication of elected officials, regardless of their political party. Once the divisiveness of elections is over, it is possible to work together for the benefit of everyone.

### Tell us a bit about your active or part-time professional interests.

Having taught high school for 35 years, I continue to believe in the importance of access to education for people of all ages. I am Co-Chair of the Cariboo Chilcotin Retired Teachers' Association, and I also serve on the Board of Governors for Thompson Rivers University.

### Finally ... pet projects? Hobbies? And, the value of remaining involved in the Association and OOTD.

I developed an interest in paleontology while teaching Earth Science and Geology during my teaching career. A current project is the McAbee Fossil Site near Cache Creek. I hope to see this site investigated for its scientific value. I am pleased to be a part of Orders of the Day. We are part of a small group of people who came together at different points in time to serve the province. I am inspired by my colleagues and their contributions.

We welcome your letters - you can mail them to:

P.O. Box 31009  
University Heights P.O.  
Victoria, B.C. V8N 6J3

Or email to: [ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com](mailto:ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com)

50 years ago

## John and Yoko fought Vietnam War with pillow talk

As the Vietnam War raged in 1969, Beatles legend John Lennon and his New York celebrity wife Yoko Ono fought back with pillow talk.

The famous duo held two week-long "Bed-Ins for Peace," one at the Hilton Hotel in Amsterdam and one at Fairmont Queen Elizabeth in Montreal. The idea was derived from then-popular "sit-ins," in which a group of protesters planted themselves in front of or inside a targeted establishment until they were evicted, arrested, or their demands were met.

John and Yoko's light-hearted spin on this form of protest was filmed and later turned into a documentary movie. The film "Bed Peace" was made available for free on YouTube in August 2011 by Yoko, as part of her website "Imagine Peace."

Knowing their March 20, 1969 marriage would be a huge press event, John and Yoko decided to use the publicity to promote world peace. They spent a week of their honeymoon in the presidential suite at the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel, inviting the world's press into their hotel room every day.

After their nude cover on the *Two Virgins* album, the press was expecting them to be having sex, but instead, they were just sitting in bed, wearing pyjamas - in John's words "like angels" - talking about peace with signs over their bed reading "Hair Peace" and "Bed Peace." After seven days, they got dressed and flew off to Vienna.

The Amsterdam Bed-In received a great deal of press coverage. Following the event, when asked if he thought the Bed-In had been successful, John insisted that the failure of the press to take the couple seriously was exactly what he and Yoko had hoped for. "It's part of our policy not to be taken seriously. Our opposition, whoever they may be, in all manifest forms, don't know how to handle humour. And we are humorous," the Beatles legend said.

The Montreal Bed-In occurred more by happenstance than by design. Their second Bed-In was initially planned to take place in New York, but Lennon was not allowed into the U.S. because of a cannabis conviction. Instead, in May they travelled south to the Bahamas and booked into the Sheraton Oceanus Hotel, but after one night of intense tropical heat decided to head for cooler temperatures in Montreal.

They landed in Montreal on May 26 where they stayed in Rooms 1738, 1740, 1742 and 1744 at the Queen Elizabeth



Hotel. During their seven-day stay, they invited Timothy Leary, Tommy Smothers, Dick Gregory, Murray the K, Al Capp, Allen Ginsberg and others to join them. All but Capp sang on the peace anthem "Give Peace a Chance" recorded by André Perry in the hotel room on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Recently, Montreal's Fairmount Queen Elizabeth unveiled its revamped Suite 1742 for the media on the International Day of Peace. And outside the hotel, on the nearby Place Ville Marie Esplanade, those who couldn't get into the suite were able to wander among posters and beds as part of an outdoor art exhibition celebrating the Lennon-Ono Bed-In.

These days, 50 years later with wars still raging around the globe, hotel guests lucky enough to get into Suite 1742 can don VR headsets to time-travel back to 1969, gaze at photos and art installations celebrating the Bed-In, and see and hear videos and podcasts on John and Yoko's pyjama-clad protest against the Vietnam War.

The four connecting rooms John and Yoko rented have been transformed into one 128-square-metre (1,378-square-foot) suite with two king beds, costing \$1,969 a night.



(Source: *Montreal Gazette* and other media files.)



# The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

*Under the distinguished patronage of  
Her Honour Janet Austin, OBC, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia*

## **Association Annual Dinner**

**Friday, September 20, 2019  
Government House, Victoria**

***With thanks to Her Honour, Lieutenant-Governor Janet Austin  
you and your guests are invited to our 2019 Dinner.***

Time: 6 p.m. for 7 p.m.  
Dress: Business attire please  
Cost: \$105 per person, taxes included  
Special Guest: **George Garrett**  
*Author and former CKNW reporter*

**This event is open to all. You and your guests need not be former MLAs. Join us for dinner and enjoy! Please advise soonest.**

Please make your cheque payable to the **Association of Former MLAs of BC** and mail it to the address below. (If you wish, you may post-date your cheque, but **no later** than September 7, 2019). Sorry, no refunds after that date. If you have already reserved, thank you!

### **Response Coupon** - please detach and return with your payment

I/we plan on attending Dinner at Government House on Friday, September 20, 2019.

My cheque for \_\_\_\_\_ persons @ \$105 is enclosed. Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*(please list additional guest names on the reverse side of this coupon)*

Box 31009, University Heights, Victoria, BC V8N 6J3  
Email: ootd@shaw.ca or ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com



# The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

*This is to notify all Members of our A.G.M.*

## **Official Notice of 2019 Annual General Meeting** **Friday, September 20, 2019**

Time and place at the Legislative Buildings to be announced



### **Additional guest names**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____