



# Elizabeth May, O.C., M.P.

Your Member of Parliament in Saanich-Gulf Islands

July 2017 Newsletter

## Introduction

You probably noticed that this newsletter is red and white, instead of our usual green ink. No political alteration has occurred. This is a special Canada 150 edition with as much information as I can pack in about how we will be marking Canada 150 in Saanich-Gulf Islands.

Many projects have now been funded out of the federal Canada 150 funds within Saanich-Gulf Islands. Our biggest local successful federal funding in the 2017 budget is not connected to Canada's birthday at all. I am happy to say that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Plant Health Centre on East Saanich Road will receive \$8 million for a major modernization. This century-old facility was slated for closing under the previous government's 2012 budget. I persuaded former Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz to keep it open. Now, it will receive funding to keep it world class into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Meanwhile, as we look back at Canada's first 150 years, we look forward to the future. And we recall that the land that is now Canada was not unoccupied when Europeans first came and started claiming the lands.

We mark our sesquicentennial in bittersweet ways – celebrating love of country, recognizing the challenges of true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and experiencing gratitude that we make our home on a blessed piece of Turtle Island, in the best country in the world in which to live.

Have safe and fun celebrations!

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## Looking back – Canada in 1967



Sidney Canada Day Parade 2013



Travelling by water taxi between Canada Day events in Sidney and Salt Spring Island with MLA Holman in 2015

We get nostalgic at birthdays. With the arrival of July 1, 2017 and Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, thoughts turn to 1967 and our big 100 birthday bash. It was grand and I remember it well.

It was the first time I had ever been to Montreal. My parents, my little brother and I drove to Montreal for Expo 67. We stayed at the home of parents of one of my mom's friends. They were away and their Westmount home was our home for the week. Oblivious to the politically incongruous sentiment, my dad observed that he loved Montreal because it reminded him so much of his childhood in England. Yes, in 1967, in Westmount, English ruled. It set me up to understand Quebec separatism when it happened.

Expo 67 was on a man-made island in the St. Lawrence River. Even that seemed magical. We toured the Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome and the futuristic Habitat concrete, low-impact apartments. The world of the future was tangible. The Canadian flag was still new and it flew jauntily everywhere – inviting the world to fall in love with us.

Our image in the world was burnished by a wave of progressive policies. Our prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, kept Canada out of the war in Vietnam. In a minority parliament, Pearson with support from Tommy Douglas, brought in our health care system - universal, single-payer health care. That same parliament established the Canada Pension Plan, made major improvements to unemployment insurance, interest-free student loans, and introduced the new flag!

That minority parliament is one to study as BC sets out with a government made up of parties that have to cooperate to govern. The Liberal minority of Lester B. Pearson, operating with NDP support, did great things for our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

We were a country at 100 ready to celebrate our youth. We were new and fresh and that single red maple leaf spoke of optimism and confidence.

And now we are 150. Where does the time go?

And we are ready to celebrate. But the celebration in 2017 is far more self-aware than that in 1967. We know more home truths about ourselves. Like, whose home is it?

We know we live on the territories of the Indigenous civilizations that were here before us. We are the settler people and we live on lands of the Indigenous people. Everywhere that is Canada. So is it our 150<sup>th</sup> "birthday" or is it the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the British North America Act in which the British Empire decided one of its colonies could continue to colonize someone else's land? How do we celebrate?

For our 150<sup>th</sup>, we share the joy and pride in the nation that is Canada. As your MP, I want to explore with all the constituents of Saanich-Gulf Islands what we want for the next 150 years.

The historical wrongs and injustices of the last 150 years must be acknowledged and then righted. The next 150 years must be forged in reconciliation, truth and justice. But that does not mean we cannot celebrate this milestone in our shared history.

## Parliament 1867 to now

The roots of the Canadian Parliament can be traced back hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

Canada's Parliament owes its more specific configurations to the Westminster Parliamentary system as it evolved in England. The first humbling of a king before his subjects was on the fields of Runnymede in 1215. King John had angered the lords of his court by passing laws that affected their property without consulting them. When King John signed Magna Carta, it was an extraordinary realignment of the rights, responsibilities and powers of a monarch in regard to his subjects. For the first time, the king was forced to admit that he was not above the law, but he owed an obligation to consult with a council of lords and peers.

This obligation to consult evolved over time to the Westminster parliamentary model now found in Commonwealth countries around the world. The chamber of lords became in the UK the House of Lords, and in Canada, the Senate. Initially the commoners had no organized role, but in the fourteenth century the king asked the commoners to elect a speaker from among themselves so that their concerns could be voiced directly to the king. The lower house for commoners eventually became the House of Commons.

Those closest to the king, those privy to his secrets, laid the basis for what evolved to a Privy Council – or Cabinet. It is this connection to the monarch that continues with the swearing in of Cabinet members at Rideau Hall. The P.C. designation after the name of current and past Privy Councillors denotes that they are still to be trusted with the secrets of the nation.

Parliament was more established in the Tudor era, but it was not until the Industrial Revolution that the role of the monarch became entirely ceremonial. As Canada was establishing what we thought were the first democratic institutions in North America, with the first democratically elected legislature convening in Halifax in 1758, we were, naturally enough, modeling our governance on that of England.

In our conceit, we missed that there were already systems of democratic governance in North America. For over 900 years the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had operated under the Great Law of Peace. As John Ralston Saul explained in *A Fair Country*, Canada could have looked to this extraordinary model; one that included separation of powers with a balancing of the male rule with the matriarchs of the society. In fact Saul argues that, almost by osmosis, the Canadian value of consensus-building was absorbed from the pre-existing civilization found on the land foreigners colonized.

One can even make the case, as Saul does, that the words of the British North America Act, which created an independent Canada in 1867, owe much to the sensibilities of the Great Law of Peace. Our system of governance was put in place to serve the goals of “peace, order and good government.”

Since 1867, our democracy has evolved in many ways. It would be easy to assume that this evolution has favoured increasing the level of accountability, democratic legitimacy, and respect for all peoples. Women got the vote. Japanese Canadians got the vote. Indigenous Canadians finally got the right to vote. In 1982, under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Canadians finally received constitutionally protected rights in a repatriated Canadian Constitution. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms has advanced rights for marginalized peoples within Canada, whether for First Nations, LGBTQ, the disabled, women or refugees.

It is true that Canada is, in 2017, much more a recognized functional democracy than we were in 1867. But there is one aspect of our evolution that runs counter to enhanced democracy. One area, the role of members of Parliament, has been made increasingly unequal and less democratic. Whereas in our initial parliamentary gatherings, MPs were seen as equal, with even the prime minister seen as “first among equals,” the growth in the power of political parties has steadily reduced the scope of action of individual members of Parliament. Some of this has been incremental and accomplished through unwritten

rules. Some has been the result of highly specific changes concretized in Standing Orders and legislation. The general drift has been toward increasingly centralizing the powers of the executive (prime minister and Privy Council) at the expense of the legislative branch.

Political parties are not mentioned in the Canadian Constitution, neither in the 1867 version of the British North America Act, nor our 1982 Constitution Act. In Westminster Parliamentary democracy, political parties are not an essential ingredient. I have often said that if I were to invent democracy from scratch, I would not have invented political parties. Their existence is not a necessary, nor even desirable, part of responsible government. In fact, political parties work against it.

Initially, political parties in British Parliament were loose factions. In the seventeenth century the derogatory terms “Whig” and “Tory” emerged to characterize the general philosophy of those who tended toward more liberal or conservative ideals. They tended to form around a particularly strong leader. Running for parliament, out on the hustings, a candidate could make his (no “her”, in those days) political philosophy clear by declaring an allegiance with Gladstone over Disraeli.

Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald ran under the Conservative Party banner, but he exerted nearly no control over members of Parliament within his own caucus. Macdonald referred to them as “loose fish.”

Candidates for office, running for seats in our House of Commons, were on the ballot solely by their own name. Political party affiliations were not included on the ballots from 1867 until 1974. We are so accustomed in Canada to the dominance of political labels or “brands” and to the characteristics of local candidates being a minor element in the gladiatorial contest between national parties and their leaders, that it is something of a surprise to realize how recently the role of political parties became dominant.

The key change was made in legislation in 1970, but did not change the ballots until the general election of 1974. For the first time, political parties had to register with Elections Canada, field at least fifty candidates across the country and have the leader of the party authorize each candidate's nomination papers in order to be listed on the ballot under that party's banner. This new system imposed financial reporting requirements on political parties and many other positive steps toward accountability. It also had the unintended consequence of increasing the ability of the party's leader to hold power, with the use of threats and retributions, when a candidate or sitting MP earned the leader's ire. For the first time a candidate could be disqualified from running if their party's leader refused to sign their nomination papers. This was the case even if that candidate was duly nominated through an open and fair nomination race at the local level. Top-down control by the party leader over nominations was introduced for the first time.

The effect was to significantly increase the power of a party leader over his or her caucus. No more “loose fish!” Any sign of veering from the party line could be met with swift and effective retribution.

As party leaders accumulated power, so did power concentrate in the Prime Minister's Office – or PMO. Just as political parties are nowhere mentioned in our Constitution, neither is the Prime Minister's Office. In fact, there are scant references to the prime minister at all. Canadians are so enveloped in US political culture that we often fail to observe these fundamental differences. In the US, there must be a Vice President, constitutionally empowered to take the helm as president, should the president die or become incapacitated. Of course, we have no such thing as a vice prime minister. The prime minister is not our head of state.

As each prime minister assumed power, each consolidated and expanded the powers of the prime minister they replaced. Mulroney's PMO was larger than Trudeau's; Chretien's PMO expanded once again, there was a brief pause and concern for

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## Parliament 1867 to now — continued

the democratic deficit under Paul Martin, but once Stephen Harper occupied the PMO, the expansion of the power base became the closest we've come to one man rule in the history of Canada.

Although there are some signs of change under the Justin Trudeau Liberals, the overall risks of ongoing erosion of the rights of individual MPs continues. Even if the Trudeau administration continues efforts to democratize parliament, without legislated and rule-bound changes, the characteristics of excessive party and PMO control remain a threat.

A series of laudatory reforms would include legislation to require a vote to prorogue the House. In the normal course of traditional termination of a session, such a vote should easily carry with a super majority of 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s. If ever again a prime minister should be tempted to prorogue to avoid a confidence vote or political difficulty, the 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s requirement should suffice to preserve our constitutional principles of the supremacy of parliament.

A key indicator of the degree of parliamentary democracy is the extent to which the rights of each and every MP are respected and equal. The single most important reform will be through changing our voting system. A more consensus-based voting system, under some form of proportionality, will inevitably reduce the adversarial nature of parliament. While not a panacea for all ills, consensus-based voting tends to enhance cross-party cooperation. So too will a change to ensure parliamentary seats reflect the way Canadians have actually voted, reducing the excesses of prime ministerial power. A more consensus-based decision method will inevitably reduce the power of the centre. If we as parliamentarians operate to ensure that all Canadians are treated equally, by ensuring that their representative in parliament is treated equally, the unhealthy trends of decades could be reversed.

*(This article is a very condensed version of my chapter in the new book, Turning Parliament Inside Out, in which eight MPs from four different parties make concrete proposals to improve our parliament. The chief editor was Kennedy Stewart, NDP MP from Burnaby South, helped by co-editors Scott Simms, Liberal, Coast of Bays – Central-Notre Dame and Michael Chong, Conservative, Wellington–Halton Hills. Published by Douglas and McIntyre, all proceeds to Samara – a non-profit organization committed to enhancing Canadian democracy.)*

## Canada 150 by the numbers

**\$500 million:** what the federal government will spend on Canada 150 celebrations this year

**\$210 million:** what the previous Conservative government had budgeted for the celebrations

**Zero:** admission price to national parks this year

**3.6 million:** the population of Canada in 1867

**36.5 million:** Canada's current population

**4:** number of provinces in 1867

**13:** number of provinces and territories now

**6:** the number of heads of state over the last 150 years

**23:** number of Canadian Prime Ministers over the last 150 years

**69 days:** term of Canada's shortest-serving Prime Minister, Sir Charles Tupper, May 1 – July 8, 1896

**7,826 days:** term of Canada's longest serving Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, December 29, 1921 – November 15, 1948

**39:** age of youngest Prime Minister on swearing in, Joe Clark

**74:** age of the oldest Prime Minister on swearing in, Charles Tupper

**4:** number of Prime Ministers born outside of Canada (two in Scotland: Sir John A Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie; two in England: Mackenzie Bowell and John Turner)

## Reflections on modern democracy: Two former prime ministers in an armchair conversation

On May 8, 2017, I attended a remarked evening in Toronto. It was the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre Spirit of Hope Gala. The keynote event of a remarkable programme was a conversation between former Canadian Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney and former UK Prime Minister, the Right Honourable David Cameron. It was a rare chance to hear former leaders with a broad sweep of history. Given what I regard as a catastrophic error in judgement in David Cameron putting in motion the referendum on the UK leaving the European Union, I did not expect to warm to him. But I did. He admitted to some measure of regret.

His touchstone, his sense of what government must do, constantly returned to respect for the rule of law. One of Cameron's observations was that when deciding whether a country was a good place to invest, one should see how often the government loses in court cases in its domestic courts. If they do, then that is a good sign. The rule of law is a firm foundation.

Both prime ministers reflected on how politics has changed because of the 24/7 news cycles and the advent of social media. David Cameron described taking people on his private tours of 10 Downing Street. He would take people into the cabinet room and ask guests to reflect on the four days in May 1940 when Winston Churchill and his cabinet debated whether or not to surrender to Hitler.

That is how Cameron described it. History books speak of it as a debate on whether or not to allow Hitler to take Europe in

exchange for England having some sort of détente with Nazi Germany. I had never heard of those four days the "War Cabinet Crisis."

Churchill had only been prime minister for a matter of days. Thank God he carried the day. The foreign secretary, Viscount Halifax, thought military victory was hopeless and urged a return to appeasement.

Cameron raised the image of that four day debate in the context of our current compressed political timelines. He asked whether such a debate would even be possible today. People would be tweeting. Media would be making assumptions. Reporters would demand to know what the Cabinet had concluded. Four days of private meetings? How could any modern Cabinet be allowed the time it takes for a reasoned debate?

Churchill's final argument ended with these words, eloquence one could never capture in a tweet: "If this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each one of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground."

So for our 150<sup>th</sup>, we need to take note of the need to ensure our technology does not overtake our intellect. We need to recognize the benefits of patience and reflection. That debate around the Cabinet table in 10 Downing Street will stay with me as a cautionary tale.

To find out more about my work in the House of Commons, trending federal issues, and upcoming events — sign up for my eNewsletter at [www.elizabethmaymp.ca](http://www.elizabethmaymp.ca).

## Canada 150 Signature Projects

The Canada 150 Fund is managed by the Department of Heritage and will spend \$210 million of the half a billion dollars set aside for the federal government's Canada 150 celebration. A large portion of the Canada 150 Fund is for what are described as Canada 150 Signature Projects. The Heritage Canada website promises such projects "are large-scale, participation-oriented activities, of national scope and with high impact."

This is the category of large and national projects. Successful applicants include the YMCA, Walrus Magazine, the youth political engagement group, Apathy is Boring, and Vox Pop Labs (the one that came up with the mydemocracy.ca survey).

One that truly spans the country is a coast to coast to coast voyage on board a scientific research vessel. The Coast to Coast to Coast (C3) Signature Project involves a 150 day voyage. Stopping in a different location every day, C3 will visit 50 coastal communities, 36 Indigenous communities, 13 National Parks and 20 Migratory Bird sanctuaries. It is organized and led by Geoff Green of the group, Students on Ice. Students on Ice has led hundreds of expeditions for young people to the Arctic and Antarctic to experience firsthand the threat of a warming world.

The C3 sailing vessel, a 220-foot repurposed Coast Guard icebreaker, departed Toronto on June 1 and will navigate our coast line – all of it! On Canada Day, they will be sailing along the coastlines of the Maritime Provinces, then heading east and north to coastal Newfoundland and Labrador, charting a course through Canada's Arctic - including through the Northwest Passage - through the summer months.

If you would like to participate, this exciting trip will have its final port of call, right here on southern Vancouver Island. Stops in Saanich—Gulf Islands start with Saturna Island on October 25, Salt Spring Island on October 26, and in Tod Inlet at Butchart Gardens on October 27. October 28 will be the final day and celebratory finale in Victoria.

You can come to see the vessel at these ports of call and follow the adventure on line at [canadac3.ca](http://canadac3.ca).

## O Canada – our national anthem

As our Parliament currently has before it a private member's bill, originally put forward by the late MP Mauril Bélanger, to change the lyrics of the English version of O Canada, I know many constituents are concerned about the change. Naturally, we are attached to the traditional words of O Canada - or at least the words in English. The words in French are also officially our national anthem and are quite different from the English. As I studied the history, I was surprised to learn how often the words had changed and how recently they had been confirmed in their current form.

Some version of O Canada has existed since 1880 with music composed by well-known composer Calixa Lavallée. It was commissioned to be performed on St. Jean Baptiste Day, June 24, 1880 for the Congrès national des Canadiens-Français (National Congress of French Canadians). The words were in French and it was not "O Canada." Its debut as an English national anthem did not come for a few decades until 1901, when it was performed for visiting royalty, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, who later became King George V and Queen Mary. The version they heard was written by Dr. Thomas Bedford Richardson and bore no relation to our current anthem.

It was not until 1908 that Robert Stanley Weir wrote the lyrics we are used to, and not until 1980 that by statute it became the official national anthem.

The French lyrics remain unchanged from the 1880 version. The new law, now before the Senate, would change "in all thy sons command" to "in all of us command." I hope those who object to the change will consider my reasoning for supporting it. If you look at the two official versions of our anthem, they do not express the same concepts. Nothing in the French calls for all our sons to experience true patriot love, yet both sets of lyrics have equal status in law. They both do beautifully express love of country – which is what a national anthem should do. There is no reason to embrace lyrics that suggest our daughters need not experience love of country in their hearts, but the English lyrics leave out daughters. As Mauril Bélanger bravely faced a rapid and terminal decline due to ALS, he fought hard to bring our lyrics into the 21st century. I voted for his bill, which now languishes in the Senate.

## Canada Day Events in Saanich—Gulf Islands

Events that I plan on attending this year are marked with an (\*).

### Galiano Island

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:30 AM; Canada Day Jamboree: Parade, Flag Raising and Festivities, Galiano North Hall.

### Mayne Island

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 12:00 PM; Lions Club Canada Day, 615 Williams Place (Lions Club).

### Pender Island

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 10:30 AM; Legion Canada Day Parade, Driftwood Centre.

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, 6:00 PM; Legion BBQ Steak Dinner, Legion Hall.

### Saanich

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 AM; Canada Day Family Parade, Gorge Road.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 8:30 AM—11:00 AM; Pancake Breakfast, Craigflower-Kosapsom Park.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 AM—4:00 PM; Artisan Market and Gorge on Art, Gorge Waterway Park.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 AM—4:00 PM; Gorge Tillicum Canada Day Show & Shine, Gorge Waterway Park/Gorge Road.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM; Strawberry Tea, Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club.

### Salt Spring Island

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 AM; Rotary Club BBQ, Salt Spring Island Rotary Club.

July 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM; SSI Conservancy Art and Nature Festival, 265 Blackburn Road.

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, 10:00 AM—3:00 PM; Canada Day Show and Shine, Hydro Field (Beside SSI Elementary School on Rainbow Road).

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, Dusk; Canada Day Fireworks Show, Ganges Harbour.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:00 AM—3:00 PM; Thrifty Foods BBQ and West of the Moon Kidz Zone, Ganges.

July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11:00 AM—3:00 PM; Teddy Bear Picnic, 182 Furness Road.

\* July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4:00 PM—9:00 PM; Crab Festival, Ganges Rotary Park.

### Saturna Island

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, 10:00 AM; Lamb BBQ, Hunter Field.

### Sidney

\* June 24<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM—9:00 PM; Paint the Town Red & White Street Party, Beacon Avenue & Fourth Street.

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM—1:00 PM; Children's Carnival, Beacon Park.

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 PM—8:00 PM; Dinner en Rouge, Beacon Park.

June 26<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 AM—1:30 PM; Celebrate the Roots of our Community, SHOAL Centre.

\* June 30<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 PM—6:00 PM; Sidney Days: Thrifty Foods Picnic in the Park, Beacon Park.

\* June 30<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM; Sidney Days: Opening Ceremonies, Beacon Park.

\* June 30<sup>th</sup>, 9:40 PM—10:30 PM; Sidney Days: Performance on the Pier, Bevan Pier.

\* June 30<sup>th</sup>, 10:15 PM; Sidney Days: Musical Fireworks Extravaganza, Sidney Waterfront.

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, 8:00 AM; Sidney Lions Pancake Breakfast, Mary Winspear Centre.

\* July 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:30 AM; Sidney Canada Day Parade, Downtown Sidney.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 12:30 PM—4:00 PM; Family Fun Day, Iroquois Park.

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 12:00 PM—4:30 PM; Slegg Build-a-Boat, Beacon Park, race begins at 4:30pm.

July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:00 AM—4:00 PM; Sidney Sidewalk Sale, Downtown Sidney.