Lessons from Canada: From Citizens’ Assemblies to Reference Panels

Peter MacLeod
Principal, MASS LBP

@masslp
years of MASS LBP
We have completed more than 200 projects with public sector and non-profit clients across Canada.
Canada on the tipping point

Per cent of population who believe the system is not working

In 14 countries, the percent of population that has lost faith is above the global average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System failing</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>S. Africa</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Colombia</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>U.K.</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Canada</th>
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For details on how the "system failing" measure was calculated, please refer to the Technical Appendix. The margin of error for the countries scores was added and subtracted from the global mean. Countries were considered above the global average if their score was higher than the global mean plus the margin of error.
Trust in all four institutions declines in 2017

Per cent trust in the four institutions of government, business, media and NGOs, 2016 vs. 2017

Source: 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer. Q11-620. Below is a list of institutions. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right using a nine-point scale, where one means that you “do not trust them at all” and nine means that you “trust them a great deal.” (Top 4 Box, Trust) General Population, Canada.
Gap between Informed Public and Mass largest yet

Per cent trust in the four institutions of government, business, media and NGOs, 2012 to 2017

- 2012: Informed Public 58, Mass Population 50, Gap 8
- 2016: Informed Public 63, Mass Population 55, Gap 8

A 7-point increase in the last year

Largest Gaps in 2017:
- USA: 21 pts
- UK: 19 pts
- France: 18 pts

Source: 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer. The Trust Index is an average of a country’s trust in the institutions of government, business, media and NGOs. Informed Public and Mass Population, Canada.
Gap between Informed Public and Mass largest yet

Per cent trust in the four institutions of government, business, media and NGOs, 2012 to 2017

- **TRUMP**: 21 pts
- **BREXIT**: 19 pts
- **GILETS**: 18 pts

A 7-point increase in the last year

Source: 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer. The Trust Index is an average of a country’s trust in the institutions of government, business, media and NGOs. Informed Public and Mass Population, Canada.
Inclusive governance

Public engagement
Two essential Canadian pilots
British Columbia, 2004

Ontario, 2006
2001: British Columbia

916,888   540,378

77 Seats   2 seats
BC Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform

25,000 invitations
10 weekends

1715 volunteers
161 members
“...people who have so little going on in their lives that they are prepared to spend 18 weekends discussing proportional representation”

Christina Blizzard, The Toronto Sun
“...looking for some excitement in their humdrum lives.”

Ian Urquhart, The Toronto Star
“It’s ridiculous.”

Professor Nelson Wiseman, University of Toronto
What has been maligned at home has been celebrated abroad.
West Belgium Citizens’ Assembly
French Citizens’ Convention
Irish Citizens’ Assembly

Danish Citizens’ Assembly
Australian Citizens’ Jury
Scottish Citizens’ Assembly
The deliberative wave

- BC & Ontario Assemblies on Electoral Reform
- Germany & Netherlands
- American Citizen Juries
- Canadian Reference Panels on Health Services
- Australian Citizens’ Juries
- Ireland
  - Irish Citizens’ Commission “Marriage Equality”
  - Irish Citizens’ Assembly “Reproductive Choice”
- Canadian Reference Panels on Provincial, Regional and Municipal Issues
- Canadian Reference Panel on Pharmacare
- Poland
- France
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- England
- Wales
- Denmark
- Spain
- Norway
Three core elements

**Mandate**

“Big ask, clear task”

**Civic Lottery**

“Randomly selected, demographically representative”

**Deliberation**

“Citizen-expert dialogue”
Three deliberative projects

Institutional
- Popularize and embed deliberative policy-making

Constitutional
- Resolve intractable national issues

Parliamentary
- Complement or replace parliamentary infrastructure
Updating the policy sequence

Problem definition and policy development

Consultation  Action

Problem identification  Citizen Deliberation  Policy Development

Consultation  Action

Problem identification  Citizen Deliberation  Policy Development

Citizen Determination  Action

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Useful recommendations
Des recommandations utiles

Enhanced transparency and institutional trust
Transparence et confiance institutionnelle

Organizational learning
L’apprentissage organisationnel

Democratic fitness
Remise en forme démocratique
Where to next?
An intentional under-the-radar strategy
ONE-OF-A-KIND, open-minded council seeks thoughtful, interested Ontarians for a deep meaningful relationship.

Citizens’ Council on Drug Benefits
The MASS model

Independent
Fee-for-service, at cost
Designed for legitimacy
Dual contracts
Helpful not superior
Consolidating inputs
Generative consensus
1. Reference Panels and Civic Lotteries
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How to run a Civic Lottery: Designing fair selection mechanisms for deliberative public processes

A Guide and License
Version 1.4

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Step 1: Defining the Task and Parameters

Before we dive into practical public engagement, it's important to clearly define the scope of the project. This ensures that everyone involved is on the same page about the purpose and goals of the civic lottery.

Examples:

1. Develop a statement of overall goals, supported by engaging with relevant stakeholders and community groups.
2. Establish clear and transparent criteria for selecting participants, ensuring a diverse and representative selection.
3. To improve the decision-making process in a certain council area, it's crucial to involve a broad range of perspectives.
4. To ensure that the lottery is fair and unbiased, it's important to have a clear and objective selection process.

Definition: A ‘civic lottery’ is a process by which voters randomly select a candidate to run in the next election. This process is typically designed to ensure that voters have an equal chance of selecting their preferred candidate, regardless of factors such as political affiliation, social status, or other demographic characteristics.

Examples:

1. In the Canadian province of Ontario, a lottery is used to select candidates for public office.
2. In the city of Calgary, a lottery is used to select jurors for jury duty.
3. In the city of Vancouver, a lottery is used to select participants for a community festival.
4. In the city of Edmonton, a lottery is used to select participants for a community event.

Objectives:

1. To ensure a fair and representative selection of participants.
2. To ensure that the process is transparent and unbiased.
3. To ensure that the participants are representative of the community.
4. To ensure that the process is fair and unbiased.

Examples:

1. To improve the decision-making process in a certain council area, it's crucial to involve a broad range of perspectives.
2. To ensure that the lottery is fair and unbiased, it's important to have a clear and objective selection process.

Guidelines:

1. Develop a statement of overall goals, supported by engaging with relevant stakeholders and community groups.
2. Establish clear and transparent criteria for selecting participants, ensuring a diverse and representative selection.
3. To improve the decision-making process in a certain council area, it's crucial to involve a broad range of perspectives.
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Examples:

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Conclusion:

By clearly defining the task and parameters, we can ensure that the civic lottery is both fair and effective. This will help to build trust and confidence in the decision-making process, and ensure that the outcomes are representative of the community.
1. Reference Panels and Civic Lotteries

Convene
Convoquer

Learn
Apprendre

Consult
Consulter

Deliberate
Déliberer

Recommend
Recommander
Residents’ Reference Panel to Review the Condominium Act
Province of Ontario
October 2013
The Members and Staff of the Grandview-Woodland Citizens’ Assembly

September 2014
Our Independent Advisory Council:

- **Joyce Drohan**, architect and urban designer at Perkins + Will

- **Steven Eastman**, co-chair of the Urban Aboriginal People’s Advisory Committee

- **Shoni Field**, former member of the BC Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform and advocate for public engagement

- **Ann McAfee**, former Co-Director of Planning for the City of Vancouver and consultant on strategic planning and public processes

- **Mark Warren**, professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia and an expert on innovative democratic processes

- **Mark Winston**, former Director of Simon Fraser University’s Centre of Dialogue, and professor of biological sciences.
A very full agenda:

1. **Orientation and learning** September - November
   - 4 Saturday meetings
   - 39 Presenters
   - 7 Walking tours
   - 1 Port boat tour
   - 1 Public roundtable

2. **Issues and Directions** December - April
   - 5 Saturdays
   - 10 Presenters
   - 3 Walking tours
   - 7 Sub area workshops
   - 1 Public roundtable

3. **Recommendations** April - May
   - 2 Saturdays
   - 1 Public roundtable
   - 2 Weeks of online editing
More than 40 Presenters and Guests

- Shane Point, Musqueam elder
- Bruce Haden, architect and urban designer
- Andrew Pask, lead community planner for Grandview-Woodland
- Meg Holden, professor of Urban Studies and Geography, Simon Fraser University
- Jane Pickering, deputy director of planning, City of Vancouver
- Abi Bond, director of housing, City of Vancouver
- James Roy, senior policy analyst, BC Non Profit Housing Association
- Thom Armstrong, executive director, Cooperative Housing Federation of BC
- James Evans, local developer
- Nick Sully, principal, Shape Architecture
- Tom Higashio, youth group coordinator, Britannia Community Services Centre
- Cynthia Low, executive director, Britannia Community Services Centre
- Sherman Chan and Paeony Leung, MOSAIC
- Jak King and Hanna Daber, Our Community, Our Plan
- Steve Anderson and Vicky Scully, Grandview-Woodland Area Council
- Kate Gibson, executive director, WISH
- Penny Street, Bruce Macdonald and Jill Kelly, Grandview Heritage Group
- Madeline Boscoe, executive director, REACH
- Nick Pogor, executive director, Commercial Drive Business Society
- Patricia Barnes, executive director, North Hastings BIA
- Lisa Leblanc, senior engineer, City of Vancouver
- Claire Gram, public health specialist, Vancouver Coastal Health
- Matt Hern, urban writer and activist
- Ian Morris, Grandview-Woodland Food Cooperative
- Sarah Florito, Streets for Everyone
- Adrian Archambault, Grandview-Woodland Community Policing
- Paul Cheng, urban designer, City of Vancouver
- Michael Kluckner, historian, writer, artist and heritage advocate
- Stu Lyon, Principal, GBL Architects
- Alice Sundberg, housing and community development consultant
- Penny Gurstein, Housing Justice Project, University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning
- Lon Leclair, manager of strategic transportation planning, City of Vancouver
- Gordon Price, chair and professor, City Program at Simon Fraser University
- Patrick Condon, chair and professor, University of British Columbia School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
- Marissa Lawrence, Reconciliation Canada
Final Report

Citizens’ Assembly on the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan

June 2015

Members’ Report
Creating new public norms

34 Reference Panels
300,000 households
1,200 panelists
30,000 hours of deliberation
1 in 38 households have received an invitation
Commissioning Citizens' Assemblies and Reference Panels

Advice for public agencies procuring long-form, deliberative processes

This guide is for public commissions and stakeholders who are interested in exploring long-form deliberative processes. It provides guidance on how to commission Citizens’ Assemblies and Reference Panels, which can be used to inform and provide recommendations on policy and strategic decisions.

Commissioning Citizens’ Assemblies and Reference Panels

1. Define the purpose of the citizen assembly or reference panel.
2. Identify a steering committee.
3. Develop the terms of reference.
4. Recruit participants.
5. Design the engagement process.
6. Manage the process.
7. Finalize the report.

How to commission a Citizens’ Assembly or Reference Panel

Advice for public agencies procuring long-form, deliberative processes

March 2015 | Version 1

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Canadian Precedents

- Digital Identity and Privacy
- Regional transportation priorities
- Housing legislation
- Income polarization
- Supervised Injection Services
- Hospital Services and Budgetting
- Municipal Amalgamation
- Long-term land use planning
- Compensation and work hours for councillors

- Heavy infrastructure
- Airport Noise
- Municipal Revenues
- Pharmaceutical insurance
- Mental Health
- Municipal Planning Policies
- Cancer Care
- Public Housing
Game-changer: Creating Canada’s Democratic Action Fund

A plan for giving Canadians a seat at the table and creating

Creating a Democratic Action Fund

The Democratic Action Fund would provide opportunities for more Canadians to shape the policies that shape their lives. Fully funded, the Democratic Action Fund would reach 800,000 Canadian households each year and provide deliberative programming for as many as 3,000 Canadians, contributing more than 120,000 hours of volunteer time to policy-making. Within ten years, every Canadian would receive an invitation to participate in one or more deliberative processes.

Moreover, these projects would:

- Support the creation of an active and engaged citizenship;
- Work to close the gap between elites and the general public;
- Increase trust in government;
- Create more responsive public policies that enjoy broad, popular support; and
- Bolster our existing system of representative democracy against the trends of rising populism, pessimism and polarization.
People want a say, but they’re also willing to serve.
The problem isn’t that we ask too much of people, but too little.