



Tragedy in the Commons: Former Members of Parliament Speak Out About Canada's Failing Democracy

Alison Loat, Michael Macmillan

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In *Tragedy in the Commons*, Alison Loat and Michael MacMillan, founders of the non-partisan think tank Samara, draw on an astonishing eighty exit interviews with former Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum to unearth surprising observations about the practice of politics in Canada.

Though Canada is at the top of international rankings of democracies, Canadians themselves increasingly don't see politics as a way to solve society's problems. Small wonder. In the news, they see grandstanding in the House of Commons and MPs pursuing agendas that don't always make sense to the people who elected them.

But elected officials make critical choices about how this wildly diverse country functions today and how it will thrive in the future. They direct billions of dollars in public funding and craft the laws that have allowed Canada to lead the way internationally. Even with so much at stake, citizens—*voters*—are turning away. How did one of the world's most functional democracies go so very wrong?

In *Tragedy in the Commons*, MPs describe arriving at their political careers almost by accident; few say they aspired to be in politics before it “happened” to them. In addition, almost without fail, each MP describes the tremendous influence of their political party: from the manipulation of the nomination process to enforced voting in the House and in committees, the unseen hand of the party dominates every aspect of the MP's existence.

Loat and MacMillan ask: Just what do we want Members of Parliament to be doing? To whom are they accountable? And should parties be trusted with the enormous power they wield with such little oversight or citizen involvement?

With unprecedented access to the perspective and experience of Canada's public leaders, *Tragedy in the Commons* concludes by offering solutions for improving the way politics works in Canada, and how all Canadians can reinvigorate a democracy that has lost its way, its purpose and the support of the public it is meant to serve.

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